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Reservist in alleged theft of referral bonuses arrested. » PAGE 2

Judge disagrees with TCGCC on commissioners' terms. » PAGE 3

10 DAYS BEFORE Christmas

JON PEREZ

Department of Public Safety personnel serenade the crowd with Christmas carols in last night's Christmas tree lighting ceremony at the parking lot of the Pedro P. Tenorio Multipurpose Center in Susupe.

'Christmas tree a symbol to appreciate life'

By JON PEREZ
jon_perez@saipantribune.com
REPORTER

Despite all the hardships the CNMI experienced in the final half of 2015, there are still a host of reasons to celebrate the Christmas season, according to acting governor Ralph DLG Torres.

Torres gave this message as he led last night's lighting ceremony of the 25-foot Christmas tree located at the parking lot of the Pedro P. Tenorio Multipurpose Center in Susupe.

The Christmas tree is a joint project of the Office of the Governor, the Women's Affairs Office, the Marianas Visitors Authority, Department of Pub-

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SNILD: Prioritize retirees' 25 pct.

By DAISY DEMAPAN
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REPORTER

The Saipan and Northern Islands Legislative Delegation explored ways yesterday to bridge the $2.65 million shortfall in the Settlement Fund, as Commonwealth retirees are owed $12.65 million compared to the $10 million allotted by the government coming from the Best Sunshine International, Ltd. annual license fee.

Igisomar

In a privileged motion that superseded two committee reports, Sen. Sixto Igisomar (R-Saipan) reiterated the need to prioritize Settlement funding in the face of House Local Bill 19-3 for a $1-million appropriation under Public Law 18-56, which is money allotted to the Third Senatorial District, and House Local

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Dynasty assets: $55.2M; liabilities: $258.5M

» Bellas says priorities will be to pay workers, taxes

» 'Purpose of Chapter 11 is to continue doing business'

By FERDIE DE LA TORRE
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REPORTER

The owner of Tinian Dynasty Hotel & Casino, Hong Kong Entertainment (Overseas) Investments Ltd., has total assets of $55.2 million, but its total liabilities reach $258.5 million, according

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INSIDE

ASIA

Attackers enter the Spanish Embassy in Kabul after a deadly car bombing.

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WORLD

Saudi voters elected 20 women for local government seats, according to results.

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LIFE & STYLE

Lady Gaga and Missy Elliott were in tears after being presented with Billboard honors.

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Local

Reservist in alleged theft of referral bonuses arrested

The U.S. Marshal Service arrested yesterday Jordan M. Jucutan, a member of the U.S. Army Reserves, who was indicted in federal court for allegedly stealing referral bonuses from the U.S. Army Reserves totaling $9,000 by fraudulently claiming that he recruited five potential soldiers and claiming the cash incentives for himself.

The U.S. Marshal Service served Jucutan the arrest warrant that U.S. District Court for the NMI Chief Judge Ramona V. Manglona issued on Thursday.

Manglona issued the arrest warrant after an indictment was filed in court charging Jucutan with theft of government property, five counts of aggravated identity theft, and nine counts of wire fraud. The court appointed attorney Pamela Brown as counsel for Jucutan.

Jucutan's initial appearance hearing will be today, Tuesday, at 10:30am.

According to the indictment, Jucutan took advantage of the U.S. Army Reserve Recruiting Assistance Program, which is designed to offer cash incentives to Army Reserve soldiers—known as recruiter assistants—to recruit other individuals to serve in the U.S. Army Reserves.

Jucutan allegedly falsely claimed that he was responsible for referring and recruiting five potential soldiers to join the Army Reserves. ***(Ferdie de la Torre)***

Farmers' co-op, Probation plead for funding

By DAISY DEMAPAN
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REPORTER

Representatives of the CNMI Farmers Cooperative Association and the CNMI Adult Probation Office pleaded with the Saipan and Northern Islands Legislative Delegation yesterday to fund their respective projects to benefit the community.

Ramon B. Camacho, former chairman of the Saipan and Northern Islands Municipal Council, voiced the need to solidify and unify the farmers' co-op.

Speaking in the vernacular, he stressed the necessity to promote the industry of farmers, noting the increase in non-communicable diseases and the many who suffer due to an unhealthy reliance on imported goods.

Despite the agreement between the Department of Lands and Natural Resources and the CNMI Farmers Cooperative Association in November for the co-op to operate at the Garapan Public Market building, Camacho said the agreement includes $300,000 in liability insurance that should have included the drawbacks created by the continued operation of the Sabalu Market and Tuesday Market.

"We are trying to centralize the farmer's market. We really want to get all farmers together," he said.

Camacho also asked for $50,000 that farmers could use to recultivate crops lost due to Typhoon Soudelor.

Crispin Deleon Guerrero, the newly elected president of the farmers' co-op, said the market was already picking up when the process got interrupted by Soudelor and other succeeding storms.

"Our goal is to put farmers together to prosper and we are

See FARMERS on Page 4

Man in cyberstalking case pleads not guilty

Brian T. Palacios has pleaded not guilty to an indictment charging him in federal court with cyberstalking, the first such criminal case filed in the CNMI.

At a hearing on Friday, Palacios, through court-appointed counsel Steven Pixley, waived the formal advisement of his constitutional rights and the reading of the charges against him.

U.S. District Court for the NMI Chief Judge Ramona V. Manglona set the jury trial for Feb. 17, 2016.

Manglona granted special assistant U.S. attorney Mohammad Khatib's oral motion to keep Palacios detained pending further proceedings.

The detention hearing will be today, Dec. 15, at 10am before Magistrate Judge Heather L. Kennedy.

Palacios was remanded to the custody of the U.S. Marshal after the hearing.

In the U.S. government's motion, Khatib said this case is eligible for a detention hearing because it involves a serious risk that Palacios will obstruct or attempt to obstruct justice, among other factors.

Khatib also seeks a protective order, saying the documentary evidence contains a large quantity of privacy-protected information that would be difficult or time-consuming to redact.

Khabit said the material consists of approximately 70 megabytes of data corresponding to more than 9,000 pages of information, nearly every page of which contains privacy-protected information.

According to the indictment, between April 19 and Sept. 15, 2015, Palacios used the Internet to disseminate harassing and threatening messages against the victim, placing that person and the spouse in fear of death and of serious bodily injury and causing substantial emotional distress to the victim and the victim's spouse. ***(Ferdie de la Torre)***

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Judge disagrees with TCGCC on commissioners' terms

»Wiseman: Formal staggering system controls commissioners' terms

By FERDIE DE LA TORRE
ferdie_delatorre@saipantribune.com
REPORTER

Superior Court Associate Judge David A. Wiseman has disagreed with the Tinian Casino Gaming Control Commission's position that a commissioner's term runs from the date of his or her confirmation, as opposed to staggered fix-date terms.

Wiseman ruled that the plain language of Section 5 of the Casino Act provides for a formal staggering system—that each of the commissioner's term should run from the date of appointment of the first set of commissioners.

In opposing the Tinian commission's argument, the Tinian government had argued that each of the commissioner's term should run from March 30, 1990, the date of appointment for the first set of commissioners, under a formal staggering scheme.

Whether the disputed commissioners are lawful incumbent members of the commission, Wiseman said that TCGCC failed to meet its burden under Rule 56 of the Commonwealth Rules of Civil Procedure to prove the matter.

Citing that TCGCC did not argue the requisite elements for a permanent injunction, Wiseman denied TCGCC's request for an injunction that would prevent Tinian Mayor Joey San Nicolas from taking any action if the court were to rule in TCGCC's favor.

The commission, executive director Lucia L. Blanco-Maratita, and commission inspector Lisa-Marie B. Aguon are suing San Nicolas and Tinian municipal treasurer Charlene M. Lizama over the mayor's refusal to pay them the salaries the TCGCC had increased in December 2014.

San Nicolas paid them only the amount as allocated in the Budget Act.

Commission chair Mathew Masga, vice chair Bernadita Palacios, and commissioner Lydia Barcinas intervened in the lawsuit after the mayor asserted that their terms had already expired and that he would appoint three new commissioners.

Wiseman heard several motions in this case last Sept. 1.

In his findings, Wiseman said each of the first five Tinian commissioners were confirmed and began serving their terms on March 30, 1990.

At the time San Nicolas' election as Tinian mayor in November 2014, there were four commissioners—Ignacio K. Quichocho, Palacios, Masga, and Barcinas—and one vacant seat on the TCGCC.

Palacios was confirmed to serve on the commission on Dec. 10, 2009, while Masga was confirmed on Oct. 10, 2012, and Barcinas on Oct. 20, 2012.

San Nicolas appointed Patrick San Nicolas to the commission on Feb. 18, 2015, and was confirmed to serve on March 25, 2015.

The mayor appointed Heather H. Barr on May 7, 2015, and was confirmed to serve on May 18, 2015.

On June 24, 2015, Jose Kiyoshi delivered a letter from San Nicolas, dated June 23, 2015, to TCGCC chair Masga concerning the terms of the commissioners, and declaring three additional vacancies on the commission.

On June 24, 2015, Masga also received a letter from Tinian treasurer Lizama notifying him that compensation for him (Masga), Barcinas, and Palacios would be discontinued on June 24, 2015.

Lizama also informed Masga that the commission's purchase requisitions or expenditures could only be authorized by Patrick San Nicolas and Barr.

On June 19, 2015, Masga, Barcinas, and Palacios sent a letter to San Nicolas, acknowledging receipt of the mayor's June 23 letter, and requesting a public hearing.

On July 6, 2015, the mayor responded to TCGCC, expressing his position that Masga, Barcinas, and Palacios were not entitled to a hearing.

In its motion, TCGCC argues that, because Section 5 of the Casino Act states that the commissioners "shall serve," the plain meaning construction of the Act precludes a construction under which a commissioner's term runs from March 30, 1990, the date of the initial appointment of TCGCC's first five members—or a formal staggering system.

The Tinian government, on the other hand, argues that Section 5 of the Casino Act's language is ambiguous as to whether a commissioner's term are calculated based on the date of confirmation or whether the terms are predetermined by the original confirmations.

In his ruling last week, Wiseman said that Section 5 of the Casino Act is unambiguous as to when the commissioner's term begins—but as to whether such term begins when the commissioner assumes office, the court is not persuaded by TCGCC's arguments in support of its interpretation.

Wiseman said the court cannot grant at this time TCGCC's request that the court issue a declaratory judgment whether each of the disputed commissioners are lawful members of the commission.

Wiseman said the court denies summary judgment on this issue because a material fact—the line of succession for each commissioner starting with the commissioner's first appointments in March 30, 1990—remains to be resolved at trial.

Last month, Wiseman ruled that Article 21 of the CNMI Constitution does not bar the Tinian and Agrihan Legislative Delegation from amending the Revised Tinian Casino Gaming Control Act. Wiseman cited Article 21 that states, "Gambling is prohibited in the Northern Mariana Islands except as provided by Commonwealth law or established through initiative in the Commonwealth or in any senatorial district."

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CHRISTMAS

From Page 1

lic Works, Division of Parks and Recreation, Department of Corrections, and the Department of Public Safety.

Torres, in a brief interview with *Saipan Tribune*, said the Christmas tree symbolizes how people must learn to appreciate life.

"We know that we've been through a lot this year. There's the Internet outage and typhoons Soudelor and Champi, but in challenge after challenge the people of the CNMI showed that they can recover," Torres said. "Becoming one community despite all the hardships is a reason for us to celebrate. Seeing the star on top of the Christmas tree symbolizes hope and how we must appreciate life in general. It brings back the holiday spirit to the kids and all of us. "

Torres said the tree must also remind everyone to be thankful for all the blessings. "We must thank Jesus, appreciate the season, and keep the holiday spirit alive."

He then thanked everyone who became part of the project in putting up the tree on short notice. "A lot of people were involved with this project. Joining and working together to finish this is an accomplishment. The people are thankful for your combined efforts," he said.

Lucy Aldan, a staff of Women's Affairs Office director Doris Drew who has been a part of the project for 15 years, said they were supposed to work on the project one week after Thanksgiving but "everyone was busy with other things."

"Some are still clearing debris left by several typhoons while others were busy with other stuff. Good thing I can always count on a lot of volunteers from various government agencies for their help," Aldan told *Saipan Tribune*, citing the five days it took them to complete the tree.

The tree lighting ceremony was supposed to take place last Friday, Dec. 11, but bad weather botched the schedule, forcing the organizers to move it to yesterday.

"Now that it is finally done, I can now have a good night's sleep," Aldan said with a laugh.

She thanked all the agencies that were involved with the project but reserved the biggest appreciation to the inmates from the Department of Corrections.

"The boys also made this possible. They were really eager to help prepare everything. That's why I've been talking to them and giving them advice not to do anymore what they did once they again became part of the community," said Aldan.

All decorations—from the ribbons and garlands, to the balls and lights—were the same ones used last year. They also took small tree branches and spray painted them silver and gold.

Torres' wife Diann and their kids, press secretary Ivan Blanco, along with Cabinet secretaries James Ada (Public Works) and Richard Seman (Lands and Natural Resources), commissioners Robert Guerrero (Corrections) and James Deleon Guerrero (Public Safety), Parks and Recreation director Eli Cabrera, Drew, MVA managing director Perry Tenorio, and several staff of their respective offices witnessed the lighting ceremony.

Acting governor Ralph DLG Torres, center, joins the men and women who made the Christmas tree project possible. JON PEREZ

SNILD

From Page 1

Bill 19-30 for $1 million appropriation under Public Law 18-43, which are local revenues collected from poker fees.

Igisomar noted previous discussions with House members on the need to scrutinize appropriations.

"It has come to my attention and we've requested this before but only recently I've seen the numbers" that the 25-percent requirement for retirees is insufficient, he said. "Based on the numbers I'm looking at, we need $12.65 million for our retirees and although I know it's coming from the Best Sunshine fee, only $10 million has been appropriated to the Fund, so we're short about $2.65 million."

Igisomar said there are other funding sources to make up for the shortfall, such as Public Law 18-30 or the Tourism Entertainment and Destination Enhancement Act of 2013.

"I believe the $1.27 million amount is available but, then again, I am not sure if that money is really available. On the other hand, based on the CNMI auditor's report for 2014, there's approximately $5.5 million that's supposed to be in excess. I'm bringing this up not to create a conundrum amongst ourselves but to really focus on one item. I truly believe there are at least [three] important things to me that really matter: the retirees, medical referral, and the road problems," he said.

Based on HLB's 19-3 and 19-30 for a combined amount of $2 million, Igisomar said: "That's $2 million available for appropriation. …Considering the crisis we have for the Retirement Fund, I'm hoping that we can come together and, if anything, go back to committee or discuss on the floor how best to appropriate $2 million that's before us to take care of the 25-percent shortage," he said.

Igisomar said one of the reason's he ran for office is to mediate the retirement issue. "I truly believe this is a crisis and I wanted to make sure we at least use that money appropriately. …[The casino bill's] primary intention I believe was for the retirees, then only after that [should] any sort of programs [be supported] for any negative impact that the casino will have on our citizens," he said.

He noted that the legislative body requested from the Finance Department the need for accountability of the money that goes toward pensions.

"I don't think we've really received certification on the accountability of the $1.27 million…or from the excess funds of $5.5 million in our auditing reports. To me, it does not necessarily mean that because they did not answer that, *isao-mu ha*'. I will continue forward, [even if] you did not answer and give us what we really want… and move forward with other priorities. I believe that in our hearts and everybody's heart that the retirees are utmost priority [as well as] medical referral and other programs," he said.

Senate floor leader Arnold Palacios (R-Saipan) said that after discussing this issue with several delegation members, "we'd like to raise concern on the settlement agreement of 25 percent. I believe 10 members of the present delegation… that passed the casino act… [in which] an exclusive license [was decided upon], when the 18th Legislature was deliberating the casino bill, the one compelling justification that a lot of the members came forth and used was to [meet] the 25-percent shortage for our retirees. Rightly so, that was a priority issue facing the Commonwealth…I believe the Executive Branch and the [Legislature] made a compelling argument that the government would make good on its commitment to provide funding to address the shortage."

As recently as last week, Palacios said, he requested information on the Settlement Fund regarding the 25 percent breakdown and received a summary of breakdowns.

He states that in this breakdown of needed funding, retirees from Rota get $1.54 million, retirees from Tinian get $1.06 million, and retirees from Saipan get $12.65 million—for a total of $15.25 million.

"Today we only put aside $10 million for Saipan retirees, meaning that Saipan's 25 percent is short of $2.65 million. To take from the points Sen. Igisomar brought up, we need to seriously revisit our priorities because what's going to happen at the end of the fiscal year is potentially those retirees that we promised 25 percent [will not see those funds]," he said.

Palacios urged delegation chair Rep. John Paul Sablan (R-Saipan) and the delegation to consider appropriation bills in light of this compelling information, which is the main reason the casino law was passed.

"I recommend that the delegation reconsider referring these local bills back to committee for further consideration," he said.

Sen. Justo Quitugua (Ind-Saipan) also requested from Finance Secretary Larrisa Larson information relative to the figures required to meet pension obligations.

"Just last week I was working with the Senate legal counsel in trying to look at ways for a 19th Legislature funding source to ensure that retirees get additional funds so their pensions come on time. If the 25 percent is short from the central government, the checks will not be released by the Settlement Fund. If that is really true than we are facing a tremendous situation with our retirees…the $12.65 million will increase because I understand that there are additional employees from our government that are retiring and are not included in the 25 percent that the central government calculated when the Settlement Fund was agreed upon," he said.

Palacios reiterated that the Settlement Fund is not an automatic allocation and that it is authorized through the senatorial districts.

Some delegation members cited the unfairness of having to use SNILD funding for central government obligations, thereby neglecting community obligations.

Speaker Joseph P. Deleon Guerrero (Ind-Saipan) said: "I understand that the Settlement Fund refused to turn over those records [as per Finance's request], consequently the only way to pay retirees [was made through the Settlement Fund]. This all points to the direction that the allocation is not correct. I think the long-term fix would have to be for us to re-evaluate Public Law 18-56 [since] tapping into these two appropriations is not the correct fix," he said.

Rep. Ramon A. Tebuteb (Ind-Saipan) said the committee has still not received any assurances from the Secretary of Finance, with delegation chair John Paul Sablan noting that the administration needs to be part of the discussion on the 25 percent allocation.

DYNASTY

From Page 1

to court documents.

Asked for comments about HKE's petition for Chapter 11 bankruptcy, HKE counsel Timothy H. Bellas disclosed yesterday that one of their first priorities will be to ask the bankruptcy court for permission to pay the unpaid salaries of Tinian Dynasty employees and unpaid federal and local taxes.

Bellas said the purpose of Chapter 11 is not to go out of business but to continue doing so.

"The filing is not entirely complete and we will be supplementing the case with additional and amended pleadings this coming week," Bellas said.

HKE filed the bankruptcy petition in the U.S. District Court for the NMI on Friday.

According to the petition, HKE's real property is worth $51,273,673 and personal property is worth $3,931,207.27, for total assets of $55,204,880.27.

HKE owes $175,282,787 to creditors who have claims secured by property; $76,793,708.35 to creditors who have unsecured claims; and $6,406,447.12 to creditors who have claims of nonpriority amounts of unsecured claims, for total liabilities of $258,482,942.47.

Among the creditors listed as having priority unsecured claims are the U.S. Department of the Treasury's Financial Crimes of Enforcement Network, which has a total claim of $75 million; Internal Revenue Service, which has a total claim of $286,617.87; and the CNMI Treasury, which has a total claim of $225,671.31.

CUC also claims for payment of past due utilities in the amount of $649,180.84 and about $180,000 in estimated October 2015 utilities.

HKE president Chun Wai Chan filed the petition.

According to the minutes of an HKE board meeting in Hong Kong last Nov. 13, the board was advised that the corporate financial condition is such that the filing of bankruptcy petition is necessary to avoid the possibility that the assets of the corporation will be insufficient to meet its obligations based on litigation expenses and the possible liabilities that may result from unliquidated but disputed claims.

The board agreed that it appears prudent and essential to seek the protection of the bankruptcy court in order to have the opportunity to formulate a plan for the rehabilitation of the corporation through reorganization.

FARMERS

From Page 2

open to any suggestions to improve," he said.

Former senator Maria Frica Pangelinan, who resigned as president and manager of the farmers' co-op earlier this year, reported on the expenditure of the $60,000 earlier appropriated to the co-op under Saipan Local Law 18-23.

She said there is a remaining balance of over $44,000 as of the date of her resignation and noted the importance of accountability and transparency for the program.

Office of Probation

Probation officer Oscar Torres lamented the insufficient $45,000 made available to address the security concerns of the NMI Judiciary.

"We are asking for $113,000 in additional funding which should patch all the issues we have in holding cells, the relocation of control cameras, and the renovation of the substance abuse center," among other needs, he said.

Chief probation officer and Saipan Higher Education Financial Assistance board member Ursula Aldan added in her address to the leadership the need for reconsideration and appropriation of $1 million to SHEFA, which were originally earmarked for students, but the delegation appropriated $1 million in unused SHEFA funds for the repair and renovation of Northern Marianas College facilities, that is on top of the $3 million from the Federal Emergency Management Agency NMC received for typhoon relief assistance.

Delegation OKs Cabrera nomination to SHEFA board

By DAISY DEMAPAN
daisy_demapan@saipantribune.com
REPORTER

The Saipan and Northern Islands Legislative Delegation confirmed yesterday Frank D. Cabrera's nomination to the Saipan Higher Education Financial Assistance board.

All 19 members present expressed confidence in Cabrera's ability to continue where former board member Jose Mafnas left off.

Cabrera, who is also program director of the CNMI Workers Compensation Commission, was appointed to the SHEFA board by Saipan Mayor David M. Apatang earlier this month.

"I'm very delighted that the SNILD delegation was very optimistic in my presentation before them last week. I think I shared more than my two cents in what we can do to enhance [SHEFA]. I've been involved with policy for so long and I think it's going to help enhance the SHEFA board," Cabrera said.

Cabrera, who has worked in the private sector for several years and spent 27 years in government, said he understands the many obstacles students face when returning home for employment.

House floor leader Angel Demapan moved for the adoption of the standing committee report to approve Cabrera's nomination.

Frank D. Cabrera, left, poses with Rep. Ramon Tebuteb after being confirmed as the newest member of the Saipan Higher Education Financial Assistance board yesterday at the House chamber on Capital Hill.
DAISY DEMAPAN

FOA brings you 'Scrooge: The Musical'

Come and join the Friends of the Arts in its Christmas presentation of *Scrooge: The Musical* in a Readers Theater format—the classical Dickens Christmas carol brought to you in music and story. Paul Dujua and Harold Easton bring you Ebenezer Scrooge with a talented performing and musical cast.

Scrooge will have three showings: Saturday, Dec. 19 at 7pm, and two programs on Sunday, Dec. 20, at 3pm and 7pm. All programs will be at the Dolphin Theater at the Marianas High School.

Come and enjoy this highlight of the Christmas season brought to you by the Friends of the Arts with support from the MHS Glee Club Rhythm 'n Harmony and the MHS Theater Club.

Reservations can be made by contacting Frank Gibson at flgibson@yahoo.com. Tickets will be available at the door. Prices of tickets are $8 for adults, $6 for FOA members, and $4 for students/children. ***(FOA)***

CUC works to trace sources of water leaks

As engineers and operators work to enhance the islandwide water transmission and distribution system, the Commonwealth Utilities Corp. continues to identify and address issues that have led to intermittent water service in several villages.

CUC customers in the villages of Upper Navy Hill, Chinatown, and Upper Miha continue to receive intermittent water service due to an issue with a high-production well at the Calhoun reservoir. At nearly 600 feet deep, the Calhoun well is one of the deepest on island. CUC Operations personnel will begin motor and pump retrieval and replacement work on the two-day project today, Dec. 15.

Also today, CUC customers in the vicinity of the Obyan well field will begin scheduled water service hours between 7am and 4pm. The scheduled hours will continue until further notice as crews investigate suspected major leaks in the area.

CUC water customers in Kagman have also experienced intermittent water service as CUC works to pinpoint the loss of a large amount of water in the area that drained the reservoir. Engineering and Operations personnel are performing system-wide pressure testing that will continue until the source of the problem has been identified. Until the cause is identified and addressed, Kagman customers will experience limited water service hours.

For more information, visit the CUC website, www.cucgov.org, or contact the CUC Water Division by calling 322-5031. ***(CUC)***

IN THE SUPERIOR COURT OF THE COMMONWEALTH OF THE NORTHERN MARIANA ISLANDS

Edward C. Cabrera Petitioner,	)	FCD – 01 CIVIL ACTION NO. 15-0585
vs.	)	
Amelita L. Quiazon Respondent	)	**SUMMONS FOR PUBLICATION**

TO THE ABOVE NAMED RESPONDENT:

YOU ARE HBEREBY SUMMONED and notified to file any answer you wish to make to the Complaint, a copy of which is on file with the court, within thirty (30) days after service of the Summons upon you, and to deliver or mail a copy of your answer to the Petitioner whose address is Mailex #274 Box 1085 as soon as practical after filing your answer it to the Clerk of Courts for filing.

Your answer should be in writing and filed with the Clerk of this Court at P.O. Box 500307 Susupe, Saipan, MP 96950. It may be prepared for you. by your counsel and sent to the Clerk of this Court by messenger or Mail. It is not necessary for you to appear personally until further notice. If you fail to file and answer in accordance with this summons, judgement by default may be taken against you for relief in the complaint.

Dated this 3rd day of December, 2015.

/s/ Clerk of Court

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High court upholds man's convictions, sentences

On Dec. 11, 2015, the Supreme Court issued *Commonwealth v. Rios*, 2015 MP 12, affirming Anthony P. Rios' convictions, sentences, and probation revocation. On appeal, Rios argued the trial court judge erred by (1) partially recusing himself from sentencing in Rios's 2013 conviction for disturbing the peace and assault and battery, (2) refusing to order a presentence investigation report at the 2012 probation revocation hearing, and (3) miscalculating the sentence at the probation revocation hearing.

In 1997, Rios pleaded guilty to three counts of sexual abuse of a child, two counts of oral copulation, and one count of rape and was sentenced to five years imprisonment, a 40-year suspended sentence, and 45 years of probation. After his release from prison in 2003, Rios reoffended and was sentenced to 10 years, five of which were suspended, with five years of probation upon release. In 2012, Rios reoffended again and was charged with two counts of sexual assault in the second degree, two counts of assault and battery, and two counts of disturbing the peace. Based upon those charges, the Commonwealth sought to revoke Rios' probation in both the 1997 and 2003 cases. Before revoking his probation, the trial judge presiding over the revocation hearing—different from the one who had presided over the 1997 and 2003 cases—denied Rios' request for a presentence investigation report. The trial judge sentenced Rios to the maximum 40-year sentence for the 1997 case and five-year sentence for the 2003 case, to be served consecutively.

While serving his revocation sentence, Rios was charged with one count of disturbing the peace. With the same judge presiding, the court found Rios guilty and sentenced him to six months imprisonment, running concurrently with the revocation sentence. At sentencing, the judge admonished Rios: "Be mindful that if there are future offenses that you're convicted on, the court may entertain…making you serve those sentences…consecutively…" More than a month later, Rios asked the judge to recuse from presiding over his final pending case. The case went to trial six days later, and Rios was convicted of one assault and battery and disturbing the peace. After reading the verdict, the judge recused from sentencing.

The high court ruled that Associate Judge Joseph N. Camacho did not err by recusing only from sentencing. In paragraph 28 of the opinion, the high court commented: "[j]udges must be vigilant… to ensure that their remarks are evenhanded. When comments cause additional litigation, they undermine the very ideals of judicial efficiency they are intended to promote." Although the trial judge's remarks may not have been prudent, the remarks did not require his disqualification from other proceedings. The high court also determined that the trial court need not order a presentence investigation report when executing a suspended sentence following probation revocation. Last, the high court ruled that the trial court properly calculated Rios' total revocation sentence.

The Supreme Court's full opinion is available at http://www.cnmilaw.org/supreme15.html. ***(NMI Judiciary)***

OVR office closed on Dec. 18

The Office of Vocational Rehabilitation will be closed on Friday, Dec. 18, 2015, from 11:30am to 4:30pm due to staff activities. Regular office hours will resume on Monday, Dec. 21, 2015. For more information, contact the Office of Vocational Rehabilitation at (670) 322-6537/8; TTY: (670) 322-6449; fax: (670) 322-6548; or email: nmidir@ovrgov.net. (OVR)

NOTICE OF ZONING BOARD PUBLIC HEARING

for

Extreme Corporation

The public is invited to attend and provide comments at a Zoning Board public hearing on this request for Conditional Use Permit. Extreme Corporation is proposing to operate an All-Terrain Vehicle Tour along the public access road in the Mount Tapochao area. This use is classified as "Amusement Outdoor, Intensive" and is permitted in the district as a Conditional Use. The project is located on Tract No. 21939-2. It is zoned as Rural.

Date: December 29, 2015, Tuesday
Time: 5:00 pm
Place: Zoning Board Conference Room, 2nd Fl. Joeten Dandan Comm'l Bldg.

The above application may be viewed at the Zoning Office, 2nd Floor, Joeten Dandan Building, Saipan. Comments on the project may be submitted orally or in writing at the public hearing. Written comments shall be submitted in writing to the Zoning Office, 2nd floor, Joeten Building, Dandan, Saipan no later than 4:30pm, Monday, December 28, 2015 or via email to therese.ogumoro@zoning.gov.mp , or US mail to Caller Box 10007, Saipan, MP 96950.

For questions or access to materials to be considered at the public hearing, or if you require assistance, please call 234-9661. This notice is provided pursuant to Public Law 6-32, as amended (2 CMC 7201, et seq. & Saipan Zoning Law of 2013).

/s/ Diego C. Blanco, Board Chairman

Notice of Zoning Board Meeting

The regular meeting of the Zoning Board will be held on Tuesday, December 29, 2015
at 5:00 PM, Zoning Board Conference Room
2nd floor, Joeten Dandan Commercial Bldg.
(Tel: 234-9661 ● Fax: 234-9666 ● e-mail: www.zoning.gov.mp)

A. Preliminary Matters
1. Call to Order
2. Roll Call
3. Adoption of Agenda
4. Adoption of 10/05/15 meeting minutes
5. Public Comments (not related to files for discussion under item B. Public Hearings)

B. Public Hearings

Conditional Use Application #2015-4093: Poong Won Corporation dba Lavista Guest House is proposing to operate a Motel/Hostel. This use is classified as "Hotel/Motel" and is permitted in the district as a Conditional Use. This business is located along Beach Road in Chalan Kanoa on Lot No. 474- EA 778 (EA 778-1, EA 778-2 and EA 778-3). It is zoned as Village Commercial.

Conditional Use Application #2015-3818: Let's Go Corporation is proposing to operate All-Terrain Vehicles between Ladder Beach and Obyan Beach areas. This use is classified as "Amusement Outdoor, Intensive" and is permitted in the district as a Conditional Use. This project is located on Lot No. 051 L 01. It is zoned as Rural.

Conditional Use Application #2015-4169: Crystal Star Corporation dba Mountain UTV is proposing to operate an All-Terrain Vehicle Tour in the Rapugao/Sadog Tasi areas. This use is classified as "Amusement Outdoor, Intensive" and is permitted in the district as a Conditional Use. The project is located on Lot No. 1330, Tract No. 22655-1, EA 801-3 and EA 801-4. These areas are zoned as Rural.

Conditional Use Application #2015-4182: Extreme Corporation is proposing to operate an All-Terrain Vehicle Tour along the public access road in the Mount Tapochao area. This use is classified as "Amusement Outdoor, Intensive" and is permitted in the district as a Conditional Use. This project is located on Tract No. 21939-2. It is zoned as Rural.

Conditional Use Application #2015-3923: Grandvrio Resort Saipan (Grandvrio Staff House) is proposing to renovate and utilize an existing 3-story building for employee quarters. This use is classified as "Institutional Residential" and is permitted in the district as a Conditional Use. This project is located in Garapan on Lot No. 007 D 03. It is zoned as Mixed Commercial.

C. Communications

D. Old Business
1. None

E. New Business
1. Correction of Technical Error Pursuant to Sections 403 and 1309 of the Saipan Zoning Law 2013 for Lot No. 018 B 101, located in Tanapag Village.
2. Office Operations Report (permits/enforcement)

F. Executive (Closed) Session

G. Miscellaneous
1. Other Matters
2. Announcements
3. Next Meeting

H. Adjourn

For questions or access to materials to be considered at the Board meeting or if you require assistance, please contact the Zoning Administrator, Therese T. Ogumoro, at 234-9661. This notice is provided pursuant to Public Law 6-32, as amended (2 CMC 7201, et seq. & 10 CMC 3511, et seq.).

/s/ Diego C. Blanco, Zoning Board Chairman

NOTICE OF ZONING BOARD PUBLIC HEARING

for

Poong Won Corporation
Dba: Lavista Guest House

The public is invited to attend and provide comments at a Zoning Board public hearing on this request for Conditional Use Permit. Poong Won Corporation dba Lavista Guest House is proposing to operate a Motel/Hostel. This use is classified as "Hotel/Motel" and is permitted in the district as a Conditional Use. This business is located along Beach Road in Chalan Kanoa on Lot No. 474 - EA 778 (EA 778-1, EA 778-2 and EA 778-3). It is zoned as Village Commercial.

Date: December 29, 2015, Tuesday
Time: 5:00 pm
Place: Zoning Board Conference Room, 2nd Fl. Joeten Dandan Comm'l Bldg.

The above application may be viewed at the Zoning Office, 2nd Floor, Joeten Dandan Building, Saipan. Comments on the project may be submitted orally or in writing at the public hearing. Written comments shall be submitted in writing to the Zoning Office, 2nd floor, Joeten Building, Dandan, Saipan no later than 4:30pm, Monday, December 28, 2015 or via email to therese.ogumoro@zoning.gov.mp , or US mail to Caller Box 10007, Saipan, MP 96950.

For questions or access to materials to be considered at the public hearing, or if you require assistance, please call 234-9661. This notice is provided pursuant to Public Law 6-32, as amended (2 CMC 7201, et seq. & Saipan Zoning Law of 2013).

/s/ Diego C. Blanco, Board Chairman

NOTICE OF ZONING BOARD PUBLIC HEARING

for

Crystal Star Corporation
Dba Mountain UTV

The public is invited to attend and provide comments at a Zoning Board public hearing on this request for Conditional Use Permit. Crystal Star Corporation dba Mountain UTV is proposing to operate an All-Terrain Vehicle Tour in the Rapugao/Sadog Tasi areas. This use is classified as "Amusement Outdoor, Intensive" and is permitted in the district as a Conditional Use. The project is located on Lot No. 1330, Tract No. 22655-1, EA 801-3 and EA 801-4. These areas are zoned as Rural.

Date: December 29, 2015, Tuesday
Time: 5:00 pm
Place: Zoning Board Conference Room, 2nd Fl. Joeten Dandan Comm'l Bldg.

The above application may be viewed at the Zoning Office, 2nd Floor, Joeten Dandan Building, Saipan. Comments on the project may be submitted orally or in writing at the public hearing. Written comments shall be submitted in writing to the Zoning Office, 2nd floor, Joeten Building, Dandan, Saipan no later than 4:30pm, Monday, December 28, 2015 or via email to therese.ogumoro@zoning.gov.mp , or US mail to Caller Box 10007, Saipan, MP 96950.

For questions or access to materials to be considered at the public hearing, or if you require assistance, please call 234-9661. This notice is provided pursuant to Public Law 6-32, as amended (2 CMC 7201, et seq. & Saipan Zoning Law of 2013).

/s/ Diego C. Blanco, Board Chairman

NOTICE OF ZONING BOARD PUBLIC HEARING

for

Let's Go Corporation

The public is invited to attend and provide comments at a Zoning Board public hearing on this request for Conditional Use Permit. Let's Go Corporation is proposing to operate All-Terrain Vehicles between Ladder Beach and Obyan Beach areas. This use is classified as "Amusement Outdoor, Intensive" and is permitted in the district as a Conditional Use. This project is located on Lot No. 051 L 01. It is zoned as Rural.

Date: December 29, 2015, Tuesday
Time: 5:00 pm
Place: Zoning Board Conference Room, 2nd Fl. Joeten Dandan Comm'l Bldg.

The above application may be viewed at the Zoning Office, 2nd Floor, Joeten Dandan Building, Saipan. Comments on the project may be submitted orally or in writing at the public hearing. Written comments shall be submitted in writing to the Zoning Office, 2nd floor, Joeten Building, Dandan, Saipan no later than 4:30pm, Monday, December 28, 2015 or via email to therese.ogumoro@zoning.gov.mp , or US mail to Caller Box 10007, Saipan, MP 96950.

For questions or access to materials to be considered at the public hearing, or if you require assistance, please call 234-9661. This notice is provided pursuant to Public Law 6-32, as amended (2 CMC 7201, et seq. & Saipan Zoning Law of 2013).

/s/ Diego C. Blanco, Board Chairman

NOTICE OF ZONING BOARD PUBLIC HEARING

for

Grandvrio Resort Saipan
(Grandvrio Staff House)

The public is invited to attend and provide comments at a Zoning Board public hearing on this request for Conditional Use Permit. Grandvrio Resort Saipan is proposing to renovate and utilize an existing 3-story building for employee quarters. This use is classified as "Institutional Residential" and is permitted in the district as a Conditional Use. The project is located in Garapan on Lot No. 007 D 03. This is zoned as Mixed Commercial.

Date: December 29, 2015, Tuesday
Time: 5:00 pm
Place: Zoning Board Conference Room, 2nd Fl. Joeten Dandan Comm'l Bldg.

The above application may be viewed at the Zoning Office, 2nd Floor, Joeten Dandan Building, Saipan. Comments on the project may be submitted orally or in writing at the public hearing. Written comments shall be submitted in writing to the Zoning Office, 2nd floor, Joeten Building, Dandan, Saipan no later than 4:30pm, Monday, December 28, 2015 or via email to therese.ogumoro@zoning.gov.mp , or US mail to Caller Box 10007, Saipan, MP 96950.

For questions or access to materials to be considered at the public hearing, or if you require assistance, please call 234-9661. This notice is provided pursuant to Public Law 6-32, as amended (2 CMC 7201, et seq. & Saipan Zoning Law of 2013).

/s/ Diego C. Blanco, Board Chairman

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CUC sets temporary power outages this week

As crews continue mounting transformers and reconnecting customers across Saipan, the Commonwealth Utilities Corp. is continuing with the next phase of the restoration by addressing portions of Saipan's power transmission and distribution system less seriously damaged by Typhoon Soudelor.

To maximize resources and accomplish restoration goals as quickly as possible, CUC will conduct a series of temporary power interruptions in the coming weeks to allow linemen safe access to the primary lines for the replacement of essential power distribution materials.

At 8am today, Dec. 15, CUC line crews will temporarily interrupt power service along Feeder 4 (including Agag and Papago) to replace three deteriorated power poles and hardware. Work on the repairs is expected to take up to three hours to complete.

At 8am Wednesday, Dec. 16, CUC line crews will temporarily interrupt power service along Feeder 2 (Puerto Rico and Garapan) to replace four deteriorated primary power poles and hardware. Work on the repairs is expected to take up to five hours to complete.

At 8am Saturday, Dec. 19, CUC line crews will temporarily interrupt power service along the Kiya 4 feeder (including Susupe and Chalan Kanoa) to replace one deteriorated primary power poles and hardware, and re-sag primary conductors. Work on the repairs is expected to take up to seven hours to complete.

The temporary power outages will also impact water service as all wells in the affected areas will be offline. As a result, CUC water customers in the affected areas will experience limited water service until the power is restored.

For more information, visit www.cucgov.org or contact the CUC Customer Call Center at 664-4CUC (664-4282). ***(CUC)***

WANTED

NEWS REPORTER

The *Saipan Tribune* is looking for a FULL-TIME news reporter.

QUALIFICATIONS

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- Fast learner, self-starter, and a team player;
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If you have what it takes to be part of a dynamic team, email your résumé and samples of your work to editor@saipantribune.com. You may also drop it off at the *Saipan Tribune* office on the second floor of the JP Center Building on Beach Road, Garapan. ON-ISLAND HIRES PREFERRED.

Saipan Tribune, Inc. is an equal opportunity employer.
Qualified women, minorities, and disabled persons are encouraged to apply.

Multi-village water outage postponed

Due to bad weather, the Commonwealth Utilities Corp.'s ongoing waterline improvement project for portions of Dandan and As Lito has been postponed until later this week.

On Thursday, Dec. 17, CUC's contractor, RNV Construction, will begin the disconnection and abandonment of the existing eight-inch asbestos concrete pipe as part of the San Vicente Service Area Extension Project, funded by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency. This phase of the project is in preparation for the waterline upgrade that will improve system pressure and create a more reliable water system.

CUC will limit the area affected by the nine-hour outage to customers along Chalan Tun Herman Pan (Airport Road) between Exploring Drive and Chalan Monsignor Martinez, as well as customers along Chalan Monsignor Guerrero from Tun Herman Pan to the NMC traffic signal, and along Chalan Monsignor Martinez from Chalan Monsignor Guerrero to Talapia Lane from 8am to 5pm. ***(CUC)***

TCF Saipan thanks supporters

The Compassionate Friends of Saipan would like to thank all people who planned, donated to, attended, supported or participated in our Candle Lighting event on Sunday, Dec. 13.

This was the 4th Annual Candle Lighting Remembrance Program on Saipan, and was a part of The Compassionate Friends' 19th Annual Worldwide Candle Lighting Service. About 100 candles were lit in remembrance of those who were "gone too soon." Over 60 children and siblings were honored with a candle and gentle memories by their loved ones.

The group specifically thanks the Department of Lands and Natural Resources, Division of Parks & Recreation, *Marianas Variety*, *Saipan Tribune*, Tina Palacios and Sorensen Media Saipan, Jillian Angeline and KSPN Channel 2, R.V. Caberos and KWAW - Magic 100.3 FM, Gary Sword and KKMP, Larry and Kui Lee for their wonderful music, Thomas Lee A. Manglona II and the the National Honor Society of Mt. Carmel school for their invaluable assistance, John Fraser, Jim Arenovski, Whispering Palms School, Lorna Arcega and family, and Reps. Ray Tebuteb, BJ Attao, and Edmund Villagomez.

The program included two video presentations, painstakingly composed by Dr. Nelson Krum; they can be viewed on You Tube. To view, search for "Compassionate Friends Saipan."

The Compassionate Friends of Saipan is a non-profit self-help organization that offers friendship, understanding and support to family members who have experienced the death of a son, daughter, brother, sister, grandchild or friend, and helps others better assist grieving families. Our monthly meetings are held on the first Thursday of the month, at 6pm in the NMPASI conference room on Middle Road in Gualo Rai. Contact Jill Derickson, 989-9821, Donna Krum, 783-1900, or e-mail TCFSaipan@gmail.com for more information. ***(PR)***

Saipan-da to give gifts on Christmas Day

Saipan-da will again be on duty Christmas Eve and Christmas Day on Saipan.

As part of its annual Happy Children in Paradise campaign and promotions for the holiday season, the Marianas Visitors Authority will give away Saipan-da backpacks to visiting children arriving at Francisco C. Ada-Saipan International Airport.

All passengers arriving on Dec. 24 and 25, 2015, will be greeted by Saipan-da and two Chamorritas in island attire. Children ages 12 and younger will receive backpacks of the character, which is well-known in Japan and loved by children from all Asian countries.

"We're excited this year to increase the age threshold of children receiving Saipan-da backpacks from age 11 to 12," said MVA marketing manager Bruce Bateman. "Truth be told, even some adults would like a Saipan-da backpack!"

MVA previously gave away over 9,000 backpacks during the summer phase of Happy Children in Paradise from July through September 2015. Saipan-da is a well-known, panda-like character well-received by children from all the NMI's source markets. It helps to keep the destination's name in front of potential visitors from Asian countries. ***(MVA)***

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Australia, Japan, US drop food, toys on Pacific islands

By AUDREY McAVOY
ASSOCIATED PRESS

HONOLULU (AP)—Australian, Japanese and U.S. air force planes are dropping food and toys on remote atolls in the Pacific as part of the U.S. military's longest-running humanitarian relief mission.

The packages will support 20,000 people across 56 islands in Micronesia, the Mariana Islands and Palau.

The U.S. Air Force began the annual Operation Christmas Drop in 1952 when a Guam-based air crew noticed residents on the island of Kapingamarangi waving at them as they flew overhead. The crew gathered items they had on the plane, attached a parachute and dropped them to the islanders.

It's a feel-good mission that also helps the U.S. achieve political aims, namely deepening three-way cooperation with close allies Australia and Japan, who are first-time participants. Analysts say the U.S. has been boosting the trilateral relationship in recent years as it keeps an eye on China's growing military.

The boxes include books, canned food and items like fishing nets that will help islanders maintain their largely subsistence lifestyle. This year, each package will also include a soccer ball.

The planes fly low, look for a safe spot to drop the bundles then release them from the back of the C-130s. University of Guam distance education staff use ham radios to talk to the islanders throughout the year and relay their needs.

Japan and Australia each sent one C-130 to join three from the U.S.

In this Dec. 8, 2015 photo provided by the U.S. Air Force, Cpl. Teome Matamua and Sgt. Phillip McIllvaney of the Australian Army 176th Air Dispatch Squadron loadmasters deliver a package to the island of MogMog in the Federated States of Micronesia as part of Operation Christmas Drop.
STAFF SGT. KATRINA BRISBIN/U.S. AIR FORCE

U.S. Air Force Brig. Gen. Gregory Guillot, who is the director of strategic plans at Pacific Air Forces, said the Christmas Drop offers a good trilateral training opportunity, particularly in a time of budget constraints and busy units.

Guillot said the three air forces have been increasing their cooperation, noting they also come together for the annual Cope North exercise on Guam and Red Flag drill in Alaska. Inviting Australia and Japan to Christmas Drop was a logical extension of other work the countries have been doing, Guillot said.

"Partnerships here in the Pacific are the key cornerstone in our strategy to maintain regional stability and prosperity. Japan and Australia share a common interest in that goal," Guillot said.

Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands
NORTHERN MARIANAS HOUSING CORPORATION
Tel. (670) 234-6866/234-9447/234-7689/234-7670 • Fax. (670) 234-9021
Email: nmhc@nmhc.gov.mp

PUBLIC NOTICE

This Notice is paid by NMHC with HUD funds.

COMBINED NOTICE OF FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT AND INTENT TO REQUEST RELEASE OF FUNDS

December 15, 2015

Government of the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands
Office of the Governor
Saipan, MP 96950 Tel: (670) 237-2200 or (670) 234-9447/6866

This notice shall satisfy the above-cited two separate but related procedural notification requirements.

REQUEST FOR RELEASE OF FUNDS

On or after December 31, 2015, the Government of the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands will submit a request to the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, Honolulu Field Office, for the release of Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) Funds under Title 1 of the Housing and Community Development Act of 1974 (PL 93-383), as amended, to undertake the following projects and purposes in Saipan, Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands:

Project/Activity Type	Purpose	Location	Total Project Cost
Kagman Community Park	Extension and restoration of the existing court to meet NCAA standards, new paint, construction of perimeter fence, installation of solar powered lighting system, construction of small scale covered bleachers, installation of playground equipment, installation of concrete picnic tables, installation of outdoor fitness equipment.	Kagman, Saipan	$150,000.00

FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT

The Government of the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands has determined that the above-listed projects will have no significant impact on the human environment. Therefore, an Environmental Impact Statement under the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 (NEPA) is not required. Additional project information is contained in the Environmental Review Record (ERR) on file at the Northern Marianas Housing Corporation Central Office in Garapan, Saipan and may be examined or copied during regular work hours, Monday through Friday except CNMI or Austerity Holidays, from 7:30 A.M. to 4:30 P.M.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

Any individual, group or agency disagreeing with this determination or wishing to comment on the projects may submit written comments to the Northern Marianas Housing Corporation, P.O. Box 500514, Saipan, MP 96950 or direct delivery to the central office in Garapan, Saipan. All comments received by December 31, 2015, will be considered by the Government of the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands prior to authorizing submission of a request for release of funds. Commentors should specify which part of this Notice they are addressing.

RELEASE OF FUNDS

The Government of the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands certifies to the U. S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, HUD Honolulu Field Office that the Government of the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands and Acting Governor Ralph DLG. Torres consent to accept the jurisdiction of the Federal Courts if an action is brought to enforce responsibilities in relation to the environmental review process, and that these responsibilities have been satisfied. The U. S. Department of Housing and Urban Development HUD Honolulu Field Office acceptance of the certification satisfies its responsibilities under the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 and related laws and authorities, and allows the Government of the Northern Mariana Islands to use Program Funds.

OBJECTION TO RELEASE OF FUNDS

The U. S. Department of Housing and Urban Development HUD Honolulu Field Office will accept objections to its release of funds and the Government of the Northern Mariana Islands certification for a period of fifteen days following anticipated submission date or its actual receipt of the request (whichever is later) only if it is on one of the following bases: (a) the certification was not executed by the Certifying Officer of the Government of the Northern Mariana Islands; (b) the Government of the Northern Mariana Islands has omitted a step or failed to make a decision or finding required by the U. S. Department of Housing and Urban Development regulations at 24 CFR Part 58; (c) the grant recipient has incurred cost not authorized by 24 CFR Part 58 before approval of the release of funds by the U. S. Department of Housing and Urban Development; or (d) another Federal agency acting pursuant to 40 CFR Part 1504 has submitted a written finding that the project is unsatisfactory from the standpoint of environmental quality. Objections must be prepared and submitted in accordance with the required procedures of 24 CFR Part 58 and shall be addressed to the U. S. Department of Housing and Urban Development Honolulu Field Office, 1132 Bishop Street, Suite 1400, Honolulu, Hawaii, 96813. Potential objectors should contact the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development to verify the actual last day of the objection period.

Ralph DLG. Torres
Acting Governor

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Email: islarealtysaipan@gmail.com

Following Information/Documents Required
Property Map/As Built Map/ Total Land Area
If available for existing building showing
exact location & building details
Owner Title Information
Owner Asking Price

Opinion

Hafa Adai!
Saipan Tribune
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MEMBER

The Associated Press | Pacific Islands News Association

EDITORIAL

Cruz's absurd refugee plan

Maybe Sen. Ted Cruz sees that fear-mongering and demagoguery are working for Donald Trump. That's the only explanation for the ill-conceived bill the Texas Republican proposed in the Senate this week to impede the resettlement of refugees seeking shelter in the United States.

Cruz's State Refugee Security Act of 2015 would amend the U.S. Immigration and Nationality Act to require the federal government to notify a state's governor at least 21 days before it resettles a refugee in that state. If the governor is not satisfied with assurances by the director of the Office of Refugee Resettlement that the refugee "does not present a security risk to the state," the governor can bar the placement.

That is absurd. For one thing, setting immigration policy is a federal prerogative, and it's unclear whether the Constitution would permit the delegation of such responsibility to a governor. And even if it did, do we really want to allow governors' political views—and let's not kid ourselves, these decisions would be political—to determine whether new arrivals are welcomed or treated fairly? The Cruz bill would set the stage for an unworkable patchwork of rules for integrating new refugees who have fled persecution and been vetted by the Department of Homeland Security and other federal agencies.

Besides, what knowledge or resources would a governor have to second-guess the assurances of the federal government that a refugee has been properly vetted by the Department of Homeland Security and other U.S. government agencies that review refugee petitions? The nation faces very real threats to its national security, but expanding the power of politicians to determine who can live in their states addresses no defined problem and encourages NIMBYism on a grand scale. The Senate's Republican leadership should let this bill die a quiet death.

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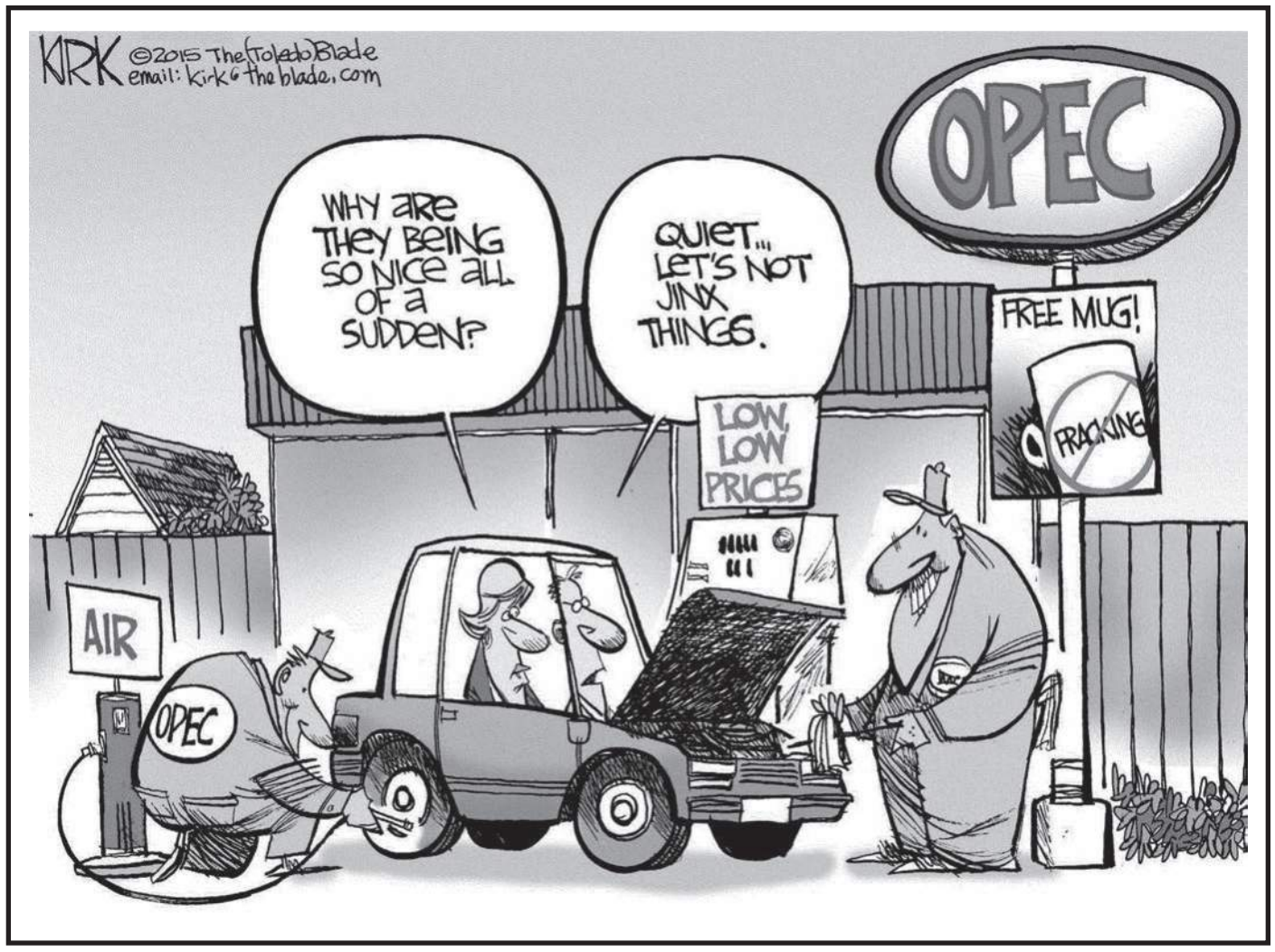


Our long presidential campaign season is turning into a long nightmare

By DICK MEYER
Scripps Washington Bureau

Dick Meyer is Chief Washington Correspondent for the Scripps Washington Bureau and DecodeDC (www.newsnet5.com/decodedc). Readers may send him email at dick.meyer@scripps.com.

If the American political system did not revolve around the two-year-long presidential campaign, Donald Trump would be little more than an ugly rash instead of the long-lasting infection he's become.

But don't worry, this isn't one more condemnation of Trump. There is nothing left to say and the Trump bacteria are immune to traditional civic antibiotics anyway.

A more enduring problem is the political system where a guy like Trump can be the dominant player for months and months, where campaigns eclipse government for two years out of every four.

The political system is not the same as our system of government, which is designed and regulated by the Constitution. I am talking about our system of political parties, primary elections and election campaigns, which evolved without design.

The Constitution has nothing to say about political parties. Primary elections were unheard of for the country's first 100 years (and they still are in almost every other modern democracy). Senators were not chosen by popular vote until 1913, after all.

But we tend to view our electioneering system to be just as untouchable and sacred as the separation of powers. It isn't. Indeed, I believe it is the area of American government and politics that would yield the most profitable reforms.

Popular primaries did not become universal until the 1960s.

One unintended consequence of this was that the sheer number of elections held in the U.S. doubled. America already held more elections than other large democracies simply because no others have such a short legislative term, two years in the House.

The universal use of popular primaries that are administered by state and local governments, not the parties, is also unique to America. In parliamentary and hybrid systems, candidates are mostly selected by party committees, leaders or conventions and much less frequently by popular vote preceded by campaigns. Taxpayers are not asked to foot the bill for the parties' candidate selection.

The primary system not only doubles the number of elections, it extends the length of election campaigns. Since the political parties no longer fund campaigns and the Supreme Court has deregulated campaign finance, individual candidates must raise their own war chests. This forces incumbents and challengers to be in perpetual campaign mode. A flourishing industry of campaign professionals has grown up around this. Again, there is nothing similar in any other country.

Another force of evil emerged in the 1970s when presidential candidates decided they needed to begin their campaigns two years before the next election. Jimmy Carter declared his candidacy for the 1976 election on Dec. 12, 1974, setting the stage for two-year campaigns. As cable news networks and then Internet news services proliferated, the perma-campaigns received more and more coverage; horse race news became the main entree of domestic news, government the side dish.

Today, a year before the general election, Donald Trump is a far bigger story than anything happening in Congress, the courts or the White House. Other countries do not pay attention to intra-party battles for nearly so long.

So if you want some American exceptionalism, this is it, for better or worse. In the eyes of the world's other democracies, our electioneering scheme is a freak show. And not because of Donald Trump. Weird, scary, fringe candidates crop up everywhere. Sometimes they win. Silvio Berlusconi led Italy for a decade, and he makes Donald Trump look as tame as Donald Duck.

In 1997, British political scientist Anthony King wrote a wickedly insightful book called, "Running Scared: Why America's Politicians Campaign Too Much And Govern Too Little." (It deserves a second life.) His essential point is that American politicians "are more vulnerable, more of the time, to the vicissitudes of electoral politics than are the politicians of any other democratic country."

Perhaps if one measures democracy by quantity not quality, this is a good thing.

I interviewed King recently and he believes the ill effects of election obesity have grown worse. He's given the condition a name I intend to pilfer—"electoralitis." Too many elections necessitate too many campaigns that are too long, too expensive and too demanding of a public servant's time and wits.

From an economist's perspective, politicians are incentivized to focus on campaigning, fundraising and expedient policy positions instead of legislating, gaining policy expertise and acquiring power within the House or Senate.

Highly qualified potential candidates that are inspired by government, not politics, are discouraged by campaigns that can be demeaning and painful for families and, if they win, jobs that the public now holds in record low esteem.

A generation of political reform after Watergate focused on campaign finance and failed. Now it's time to aim higher and wider.

Can 'Star Wars' unify a disintegrating American culture?

By CHARLES CAMOSY
The Dallas Morning News

Charles C. Camosy is an associate professor of theological and social ethics at Fordham University and a contributor to The Ultimate Star Wars and Philosophy: You Must Unlearn What You Have Learned. *He wrote this for* The Dallas Morning News.

The debate after the San Bernardino, Calif., terrorist attacks couldn't have done a better job illustrating just how divided the American people actually are.

Many reacted as if having fewer guns was the obvious response of all reasonable people; others genuinely thought this was crazytown, and that the obvious solution is more guns.

This kind of disagreement is now all too familiar in other areas of public debate. Whether the issue is race, abortion, marriage, health care, immigration, or gender, the fundamental assumptions we bring to the table are so different that we might as well be speaking different languages.

And, in some sense, we are.

In the world of academic ethics, we spend a lot of time thinking about the implications of the disintegration of not only our political culture, but of any common moral language or ideas we could use to have genuine engagement. More and more ethicists are even challenging the basis of fundamental ideas such as the equal dignity of all human beings. Professor Ruth Macklin of the Einstein College of Medicine, for instance, famously argued that "dignity is a useless concept."

We used to have a common set of theological ideas on which to draw, but our growing commitment to freedom of religion and a secular public sphere has meant such appeals today have little force. Claims that, say, all of us are created equal by God—or that we have a special duty to the stranger and the poor—have no special authority. We used to be able to appeal to the words and ideas of our founding fathers, but in an era of sensitivity to race, gender, and colonialism these are also anything but authoritative.

We seem to be running out of resources here.

But in just a few days huge swaths of our culture will drop everything and watch "Star Wars: The Force Awakens." Many will do so multiple times. The trailer has over 70 million hits on YouTube. Ticket presales are ridiculous, and many (including even Steven Spielberg) predict it will be the biggest movie of all time.

One of the main reasons so many think "Star Wars" will break all the records is because it manages to bring together an unbelievable number of people—whatever their race, whatever their gender, whatever their politics, and whatever their age. Think about how many sets of grandparents, parents and children, for instance, will find time over the holidays to see this movie together.

George Lucas' goal in making "Star Wars" was a self-conscious attempt to appeal to primordial stories and images and ideas, and his great triumph was the successful creation a new kind of mythology. His success is now even more important as one our last remaining resources for meaningful ideas which can transcend our deeps divisions.

"Star Wars" fans of all kinds can agree with Yoda that, "Luminous beings are we—not this crude matter!" We can agree with his teaching that power should be used for "knowledge and defense—never for attack." And we can see that Yoda himself exemplifies his own claim we ought not to judge people by their size.

As a ridiculous fan myself, I join many others in having been taught many other things by "Star Wars". About the interconnectedness and power of all living things. About the dignity of all persons regardless of alien origin. About the capacity of orphaned farm boys to save the universe. About the possibility of redemption for even the most evil of people.

I also learned that Empires are bad.

But "The Force Awakens" has enough pressure on it to both satisfy hard core "Star Wars" fans and be the biggest movie of all time. Can we really expect it to also be a unifying force in the face of a disintegrating culture?

This may seem like a tall order, but the advantage "Star Wars" has going for it is that it has already managed to pull this off. It has already captured the cultural imaginations of Baby Boomers, Generation X and Millennials. It has already spoken deep truths to liberals, conservatives and everyone in between. It has already formed the moral sense of people of every race, language, and way of life.

Given that director J.J. Abrams has committed to the genre, stories, and approach of the original three movies, there is reason to be hopeful. Americans might not be able to agree on what Christmas means in our culture, but we can agree on what movie to see during the Christmas season.

Let's see what we might learn from this common cultural experience. The Force may still be with us.

Me write fiction? I can't make this stuff up

By GINA BARRECA
The Hartford Courant

Gina Barreca is an English professor at the University of Connecticut, a feminist scholar who has written eight books, and a columnist for the Hartford Courant. *She can be reached through her website at http://www.ginabarreca.com.*

"Why don't you write a novel?" People ask me this all the time. I have a number of standard answers, all of which are lies.

I say I'm too busy with the columns, or with teaching and speaking, or I explain that humor doesn't lend itself easily to the long-form narrative.

All fictions.

The reason I don't actually write fiction is this: I could never invent—either in my most frenzied or in my most felicitous imaginings—a character as original, rare or intriguing as the stranger from whom I just received an email.

A woman I'd never heard from before sent me one of those emails we all get by the dozens. Laboriously crafted missives written by people with a slim mastery of what reads like stilted 18th-century syntax swarm our in-boxes daily. Sent by strangers who want to deposit millions of dollars directly into our bank accounts, such billet-doux arrive with the kind of regularity matched only by wish lists sent to Santa and hate mail sent to Congress.

We've all heard from this lady, right? She's part of an archetype. She (or her male counterpart) announces that we've been chosen to receive sacks of cash from foreign nationals because they've heard through the electronic grapevine that we are precisely the "good, honest, God-fearing" individuals who have been deemed "trustworthy" enough to "keep the risk-free information ... absolutely confidential."

Sure, close friends and family might refer to us as unreliable spendthrift atheists who have never returned so much as a borrowed dime and who can't keep a secret for more than 12 minutes (and that's how we'd be described by people who love us, remember) but somehow the gleaming purity of our character has sent its shining beacon over continents and oceans.

Doesn't that make us feel special? Well, my new benefactor made me feel very special. Not only is she an individual; she is so unrelentingly sui generis that I realized I could never make her up.

"I am Mrs. Allena Yero George an aging widow suffering from long-time illness, I am an Associate Professor of Narcolepsy, this is my pessimistic condition." (sic)

See why don't I write fiction? I can't compete with "Associate Professor of Narcolepsy." I couldn't come up with that.

Narcolepsy is a real disease, of course, which plagues people by putting them into unanticipated periods of sleep. But it's a condition, not an academic discipline. If conditions were disciplines, I'd be chairwoman of the Department of Occasional Dread and Dean of the School of Wariness.

So what enthralls me about Mrs. George? For one, I'm impressed that she was modest enough not to make herself a full professor. (And, no, the terms "full professor" and "narcoleptic" are not redundant.)

Curiously enough, however, Professor George apparently awarded herself the rank and condition of tenure. Tenure is not easy to secure; she must have a certain scholarly credibility.

At the very least it's reassuring to know that the narcolepsy position will remain undisturbed, no doubt her administrators having decided to let sleeping dogs lie.

So how does a person get tenure in the Department of Narcolepsy? Does your published work cause time-lapses during which its readers cannot account for their actions? If so, how does that differ from certain kinds of other scholarly writing? Are one's teaching capabilities assessed by invidious comparisons made to one's colleagues in the Department of Insomnia, where classes, however boring, keep everyone wide-eyed and breathing raggedly?

Are Professor George's graduate students devoted to narcolepsy or are they merely drowsy? Perhaps she can be accused of having under-theorized the underpinnings of the narcoleptic perspective. Perhaps, as a friend suggested, to make full professor she would have needed to demonstrate an ability to nap harder and provide a bibliography.

No wonder my correspondent is in a "pessimistic condition." I'm not in such an optimistic condition myself having read her note.

And yet "The Pessimistic Condition" would make an ideal title for a Philip Roth book or a previously undiscovered manuscript by Iris Murdoch.

You see, although I can't write fiction, I know it when I read it—and Professor George's dream of benevolence is a doozy. Her message is a wake-up call: Life is full of stories, lies and solid-gold material.

An equal fight

By GAYLE TZEMACH LEMMON
Los Angeles Times

Gayle Tzemach Lemmon is a senior fellow at the Council on Foreign Relations and the author most recently of Ashley's War: The Untold Story of a Team of Women Soldiers on the Special Ops Battlefield. *She wrote this for the* Los Angeles Times.

"The issue of women in combat per se was no longer a question," said Secretary of Defense Ashton Carter last week as he declared that all jobs in the United States military would at last be open to all Americans. "It was a reality, because women had seen combat throughout the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan—serving, fighting and in some cases making the ultimate sacrifice alongside their fellow comrades in arms."

For years women served on the front lines despite the Pentagon's Combat Exclusion Policy. They served where needed and went where the mission demanded. Even if few Americans noticed, military leaders did, leading to last week's historic announcement.

In 2008, then-2nd Lt. Megan Turpin received the Navy and Marine Corps Commendation Medal with "V" signifying valor. She was honored for leading her supply convoy through a "56-hour odyssey" in southern Afghanistan marked by rocket-propelled grenades, explosive devices and enemy gunfire. For her part, she thought she had done nothing other than her job.

Two women have received the nation's second-highest honor, the Silver Star, since World War II. In 2005 Sgt. Leigh Ann Hester, a soldier with the Kentucky National Guard, led the fight against insurgents who ambushed her convoy in Iraq. And in 2007, Army Specialist Monica Lin Brown, a medic, ran through gunfire to help save the lives of her fellow soldiers in Afghanistan after insurgents blew up their vehicle.

"Disregarding her own safety, Private First Class Brown shielded the casualties with her own body as large chunks of shrapnel and 5.56-mm. rounds began flying through the air from the burning vehicle," noted her citation for the Silver Star. "The patrol leader arrived on site and found it incredible she was still alive and treating the casualties amidst the extremely dangerous conditions she was operating under."

An estimated 300,000 women in uniform have served in the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. Female service members have earned more than 10,000 combat action badges and Bronze Stars, respectively, and at least 12 Bronze Stars with a "V," according to data gathered by the organization Women in International Security.

Women have served in intelligence gathering, as combat pilots, field artillery officers, special operations civil affairs officers and even in the ultra-secretive Delta Force. One hundred and sixty women have given their lives to their country. This year three women graduated from the Army Ranger School, the Army's premier leadership course.

First Lt. Ashley White and Capt. Jenny Moreno were members of a ground-breaking all-women team recruited for special operations combat missions. Both died on night raids in southern Afghanistan alongside the elite Army Rangers. Lt. White in 2011, Capt. Moreno two years later. In October 2013, they became the first two women to be honored at the National Infantry Museum's Memorial Walk—even though, at that time, they weren't technically able to join the infantry.

Most in the United States have enjoyed a great distance from America's 14 years of war in Afghanistan, Iraq and now Iraq once more. Less than half a percent of the population has fought 100 percent of the battles, with precious few paying close attention to the wars being fought in their names.

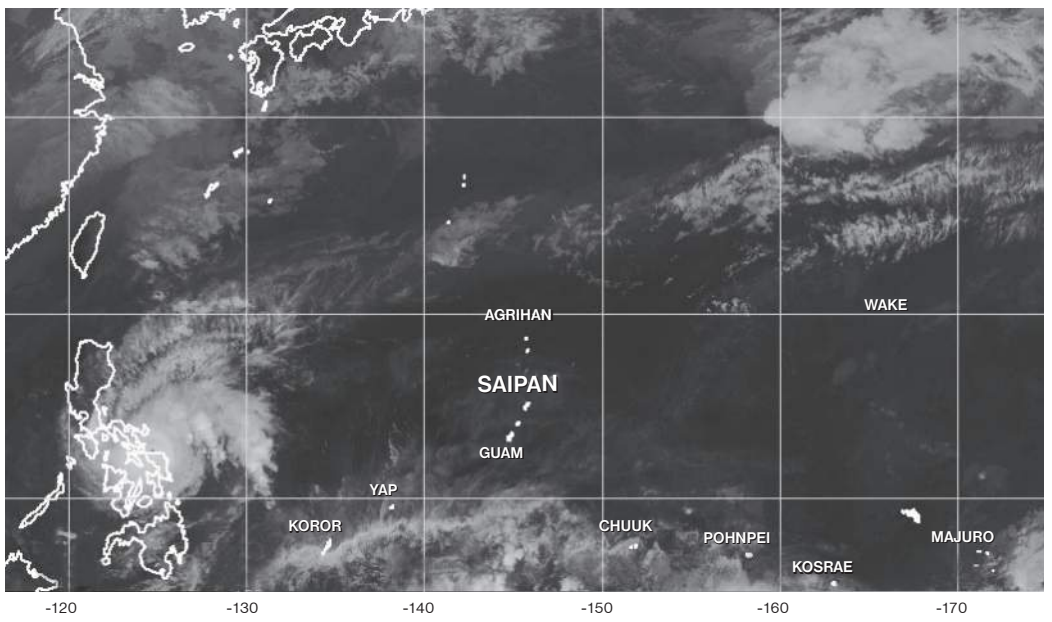
While we weren't looking, the military kept fighting, but its fighting force changed. Last week's announcement from Secretary Carter that all jobs will be open to all warriors is less a groundbreaking policy shift than simple recognition of on-the-ground, wartime reality.

The Weather

5-Day Forecast for Saipan and Tinian

TODAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
Partly cloudy and breezy with isolated showers. East winds 15 to 25 mph.	Partly cloudy with isolated showers. East winds 10 to 20 mph.	Partly cloudy with isolated showers.	Partly cloudy with isolated showers.	Partly cloudy with isolated showers.
▲88° ▼77°	▲88° ▼77°	▲88° ▼77°	▲88° ▼77°	▲88° ▼77°

Yesterday's Satellite Image



PICTURE TIME: 1:00PM, MONDAY, DECEMBER 14, 2015
Western North Pacific between equator and 25N from 130E to 180.

A frontal boundary extends southwestward from northeast of Iwo To Island through 25N147E to beyond 130E at 22N. Scattered showers and a few thunderstorms are seen along and up to 180 miles northwest of this boundary including Iwo To island. A trade-wind disturbance is triggering scattered showers over the northern CNMI between 15N and 18N from 143E to 148E. A surface trough meanders east-southeastward from near Mindanao across 5N130E through a tropical disturbance centered southeast of Yap near 4N143E to end southwest of Kosrae at EQ162E. Numerous showers and isolated thunderstorms are occurring near the disturbance between 3N and 6N from 143E to 145E. Scattered showers and a few thunderstorms are seen near the trough within 100 miles of a line from 2N139E to 4N143E and also northeast of the disturbance between 6N and 8N from 145E to 150E. Trade-wind convergence near the eastern end of the trough is creating numerous showers and scattered thunderstorms south of Pohnpei and Kosrae south of a line from 6N157E to 2N165E. Another trade-wind disturbance is producing scattered showers and a few thunderstorms southeast of Majuro within 75 miles of a line from 6N173E to 5N180.

Satellite image and accompanying information are provided by the National Weather Service. For an updated weather forecast, visit the National Weather Service Guam homepage: www.prh.noaa.gov/guam/

Micronesia

Guam And Rota	Partly Cloudy	▲86	▼79
Palau	Thunderstorms	▲88	▼76
Yap	Thunderstorms	▲87	▼79
Chuuk	Thunderstorms	▲86	▼79
Pohnpei	Partly Cloudy	▲87	▼79
Kosrae	Partly Cloudy	▲85	▼80
Majuro	Thunderstorms	▲85	▼80

Around the Globe

Auckland	Cloudy	▲68	▼58
Beijing	Sunny	▲37	▼23
Hong Kong	Partly Cloudy	▲68	▼56
Honolulu	Mostly Sunny	▲84	▼73
London	Rain	▲54	▼52
Los Angeles	Sunny	▲60	▼40
Manila	Thunderstorms	▲82	▼76
Melbourne	Mostly Sunny	▲83	▼59
Miami	Partly Cloudy	▲82	▼73
New York	Showers	▲63	▼57
Osaka	Rain	▲63	▼54
Paris	Rain	▲51	▼50
Pusan	Partly Cloudy	▲55	▼36
Rome	Sunny	▲60	▼44
Salem	Rain	▲43	▼34
San Francisco	Mostly Sunny	▲56	▼43
Seoul	Partly Cloudy	▲47	▼31
Tokyo	Mostly Cloudy	▲58	▼48
Washington, DC	Rain	▲69	▼55

NMI CRIME STOPPERS
Anonymous tips can now be submitted through the following:
- Call 234-7272 (PARA) on any telephone
- *11 on any IT&E cellular phone
- Log on to the internet at www.nmicrimestoppers.com

Tides

Saipan Harbor

4:02 AM	Today	Low Tide:	-0.3 Feet
11:04 AM	Today	High Tide:	2.0 Feet
4:51 PM	Today	Low Tide:	1.1 Feet
9:29 PM	Today	High Tide:	1.8 Feet

Sunrise/Sunset

Today	6:35 AM	5:49 PM
Wednesday	6:35 AM	5:49 PM
Thursday	6:36 AM	5:50 PM
Friday	6:36 AM	5:50 PM
Saturday	6:37 AM	5:51 PM

Moonrise/Moonset

Today	9:30 AM	9:22 PM
Wednesday	10:19 AM	10:19 PM
Thursday	11:07 AM	11:15 PM
Friday	11:53 AM	
Saturday	12:40 PM	12:11 AM

Note: Blank spaces indicate that a rising or a setting did not occur during that 24-hour interval.

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FLIGHT SCHEDULE AS OF DECEMBER 4, 2015

DEPARTURES

SAIPAN-GUAM (GUM)

UA2924	4:15am	5:05am	Daily
UA2922	8:40am	9:30am	Daily
UA2921	1:30pm	3:10pm	1, 4, 5, 7 via Rota
UA2920	2:20pm	3:10pm	2, 3, 6
UA2928	6:05pm	6:55pm	Daily
UA2926	9:50pm	10:40pm	Daily

SAIPAN-ROTA (ROP)

UA2921	1:30pm	2:05pm	1, 4, 5, 7

ROTA (ROP)-GUAM (GUM)

UA2921	2:35pm	3:10pm	1, 4, 5, 7

SAIPAN-NARITA (NRT)

DL297	4:20pm	7:10pm	Daily

SAIPAN-SEOUL (ICN)

OZ626	2:10am	6:00am	1
OZ626	2:50am	6:40am	2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7
OZ628	3:50am	7:40am	Daily
7C3403	4:35am	8:30am	Daily
7C3401	4:30pm	8:25pm	Daily

SAIPAN-BUSAN (PUS)

OZ608	3:10am	6:20am	4, 7

SAIPAN-SHANGHAI (PVG)

3U8648	6:10am	8:40am	1, 4, 5, 7

SAIPAN-BEIJING (PEK)

MU764	1:30am	5:30am	3, 5, 7

SAIPAN-GUANGZHOU (CAN)

3U8646	4:20am	7:30am	2, 6

SAIPAN-MANILA (MNL)

OZ626/701	2:10am	11:15am	1 via ICN
OZ626/701	2:50am	11:15am	2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7 via ICN
UA2924/191	4:15am	9:00am	3, 6 via GUM
UA2924/PR111	4:15am	9:20am	1, 2, 4, 6, 7 via GUM
UA2924/183	4:15am	9:30pm	2, 5 via GUM
UA2924/183	4:15am	9:50pm	1, 3, 4, 6, 7 via GUM
UA2922/183	8:40am	9:30pm	2, 5 via GUM
UA2922/183	8:40am	9:50pm	1, 3, 4, 6, 7 via GUM
UA2921/183	1:30pm	9:30pm	5 via Rota-GUM
UA2921/183	1:30pm	9:50pm	1, 4, 7 via Rota-GUM
UA5038/183	2:20pm	9:30pm	2 via GUM
UA5038/183	2:20pm	9:50pm	3, 6 via GUM
UA5072/191	9:50pm	7:20am+1	1, 6 via GUM

SAIPAN-HONG KONG (HKG)

OZ626/721	2:10am	11:50am	1 via ICN
OZ626/721	2:50am	11:50am	2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7 via ICN
OZ628/721	3:50am	12:50am	Daily via ICN
UA2924/159	4:15am	10:35pm	1, 3, 5, 6 via GUM
UA2922/159	8:40am	10:35pm	1, 3, 5, 6 via GUM
UA2921/159	1:30pm	10:35pm	1, 5 via Rota-GUM
UA2920/159	2:20pm	10:35pm	3, 6 via GUM

ARRIVALS

GUAM (GUM)-SAIPAN

UA2923	2:45am	3:35am	Daily
UA2925	7:15am	8:05am	Daily
UA2921	12:10pm	1:00pm	1, 4, 5, 7
UA2920	12:10pm	1:50pm	2, 3, 6 via Rota
UA2927	4:45pm	5:35pm	Daily
UA2929	8:30pm	9:20pm	Daily

GUAM (GUM)-ROTA (ROP)

UA2920	12:10pm	12:45pm	2, 3, 6

ROTA (ROP)-SAIPAN

UA2920	1:15pm	1:50pm	2, 3, 6

NARITA (NRT)-SAIPAN

DL298	10:35am	3:10pm	Daily

SEOUL (ICN)-SAIPAN

7C3402	10:10am	3:30pm	Daily
OZ625	7:40pm	1:00am+1	7
OZ625	8:20pm	1:40am+1	1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6
OZ627	9:30pm	2:50am+1	Daily
7C3404	10:10pm	3:30am+1	Daily

BUSAN (PUS)-SAIPAN

OZ607	9:00pm	1:50am+1	3, 6

SHANGHAI (PVG)-SAIPAN

3U8647	10:40pm	5:00am+1	3, 4, 6, 7

BEIJING (PEK)-SAIPAN

MU763	4:30pm	12:30am+1	2, 4, 6

GUANGZHOU (CAN)-SAIPAN

3U8645	7:40pm	3:00am+1	1, 5

MANILA (MNL)-SAIPAN

UA190/2929	9:55am	9:20pm	2, 6, 7 via GUM
UA190/2929	10:00am	9:20pm	3 via GUM
OZ702/625	12:30pm	1:00am+1	7 via ICN
OZ702/625	12:30pm	1:40am+1	1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6 via ICN
OZ702/627	12:30pm	2:50am+1	Daily via ICN
PR110/UA2925	10:05pm	8:05am+1	1, 3, 5, 6, 7 via GUM
UA184/2925	10:55pm	8:05am+1	1, 3, 4, 6, 7 via GUM
UA184/2921	10:55pm	1:00pm+1	3, 4, 6, 7 via GUM
UA184/2920	10:55pm	1:50pm+1	1 via GUM-Rota
UA184/2927	10:55pm	5:35pm+1	1, 3, 4, 6, 7 via GUM
UA184/2929	10:55pm	9:20pm+1	1, 3, 4, 6, 7 via GUM
UA184/2925	11:59pm	8:05am+1	2, 5 via GUM
UA184/2920	11:59pm	1:50pm+1	2, 5 via GUM-Rota
UA184/2927	11:59pm	5:35pm+1	2, 5 via GUM
UA184/2929	11:59pm	9:20pm+1	2, 5 via GUM

HONG KONG (HKG)-SAIPAN

OZ722/625	1:15pm	1:00am+1	7 via ICN
OZ722/625	1:15pm	1:40am+1	1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6 via ICN
OZ724/627	2:20pm	2:50am+1	Daily via ICN
UA116/2925	10:55pm	8:05am+1	1, 3, 5, 6 via GUM
UA116/2921	10:55pm	1:00pm+1	3, 6 via GUM
UA116/2920	10:55pm	1:50pm+1	1, 5 via GUM-Rota
UA116/2927	10:55pm	5:35pm+1	1, 3, 5, 6 via GUM
UA116/2929	10:55pm	9:20pm+1	1, 3, 5, 6 via GUM

LEGEND: Days: Monday (1), Tuesday (2), Wednesday (3), Thursday (4), Friday (5), Saturday (6) and Sunday (7); 3U: Sichuan Airlines; MU: China Eastern; UA: United Airlines; DL: Delta Airlines; OZ: Asiana; 7C: Jeju AirETD: Estimated Time of Departure; ETA: Estimated Time of Arrival. The Saipan Tribune is not responsible for any changes in the schedule.)

STAR MARIANAS AIR, INC.

TINIAN TO SAIPAN

DEPARTURE	ARRIVAL	FREQUENCY
6:30AM	6:45AM	Mon, Tue,Wed, Thu, Fri, Sat
7:30AM	7:45AM	Daily
8:30AM	8:45AM	Daily
9:30AM	9:45AM	Daily
10:30AM	10:45AM	Daily
11:30AM	11:45AM	Daily
12:30NN	12:45NN	Daily
1:30PM	1:45PM	Daily
2:30PM	2:45PM	Daily
3:30PM	3:45PM	Daily
4:30PM	4:45PM	Daily
5:30PM	5:45PM	Daily
6:30PM	6:45PM	Daily

SAIPAN TO TINIAN

DEPARTURE	ARRIVAL	FREQUENCY
7:00AM	7:15AM	Daily
8:00AM	8:15AM	Daily
9:00AM	9:15AM	Daily
10:00AM	10:15AM	Daily
11:00AM	11:15AM	Daily
12:00NN	12:15NN	Daily
1:00PM	1:15PM	Daily
2:00PM	2:15PM	Daily
3:00PM	3:15PM	Daily
4:00PM	4:15PM	Daily
5:00PM	5:15PM	Daily
6:00PM	6:15PM	Daily

SAIPAN TO ROTA

DEPARTURE	ARRIVAL	FREQUENCY
7:45AM	8:15AM	Mon, Tues,Wed, Thu, Fri, Sat
4:00PM	4:30PM	Mon, Tues,Wed, Thu, Fri, Sat

ROTA TO SAIPAN

DEPARTURE	ARRIVAL	FREQUENCY
8:30AM	9:00AM	Mon, Tues,Wed, Thu, Fri, Sat
4:45PM	5:15PM	Mon, Tues,Wed, Thu, Fri, Sat

Christmas in the Marianas Festival

PHOTOS By JON PEREZ

Middle school students of the Northern Marianas International School perform during the Christmas Carol competition of last Saturday's Christmas in the Marianas Festival at the Paseo de Marianas in Garapan.

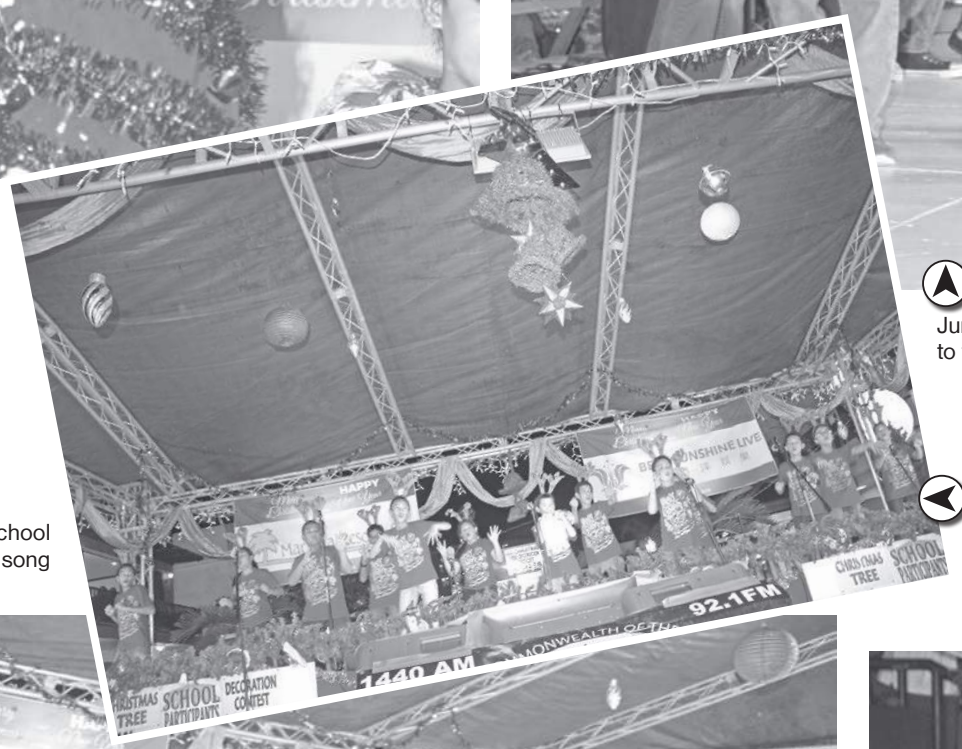
A Japanese tourist dressed as Santa Claus gives candies and other treats to the kids.

Frankileain Kapileo, also a contestant in the Crazy Costume, joins her schoolmates at Chacha Oceanview Middle School in their Grinch-inspired skit.

Junior Santa Claus waves to the crowd.

NMIS' Christian Aldan pumps up the crowd with a spirited performance.

Emcee Gordon Marciano, right, and Marianas Visitors Authority community projects assistant Ryan S. Calvo enjoy a light moment during a brief break in the day's program.



NMIS students sing a Christmas carol.

Kagman High School students perform a song number.

Kagman High School students show the crowd how the Marianas party during Christmas time.

Business

Now comes the tough part: The world's carbon diet starts

PARIS (AP)—The world is about to go on a carbon diet. It won't be easy—or cheap.

Nearly 200 nations across the world on Saturday approved a first-of-its-kind universal agreement to wean Earth off fossil fuels and slow global warming, patting themselves on the back for showing such resolve.

On Sunday morning, like for many first day dieters, the reality sets in. The numbers—like calorie limits and hours needed in the gym—are daunting.

How daunting? Try more than 7.04 billion tons (if you really want to have your eyes bug out, that's 15.5 trillion pounds). That's how much carbon dioxide needs to stay in the ground instead of being spewed into the atmosphere for those reductions to happen, even if you take the easier of two goals mentioned in Saturday's deal. To get to the harder goal, it's even larger numbers.

In the pact, the countries pledged to limit global warming to about another degree Celsius (1.8 degrees Fahrenheit) from now—and if they can, only half that.

Another, more vague, goal is that by sometime in the second half of the century, man-made greenhouse gas emissions—which includes methane and other heat-trapping gases as well as carbon dioxide—won't exceed the amount that nature absorbs. Earth's carbon cycle, which is complex and ever-changing, would have to get back to balance.

In practice, that means the world has to emit close to zero greenhouse gases by 2070 to reach the easier goal, or by 2050 to reach the harder one, said John Schellnhuber, director of the Potsdam Institute for Climate Impact Research in Germany.

Oh and by the way, the harder goal—limit warming by another half a degree Celsius (0.9 Fahrenheit)- is probably already impossible, said Joeri Rogelj at the International Institute for Applied Systems Analysis in Austria. Most likely the best the world can hope for is overshooting that temperature by a few tenths of a degree and then somehow slowly—over decades if not centuries—come back to the target temperature.

That may involve something called negative emissions. That's when the world—technology and nature combined—take out more carbon dioxide from the air than humanity puts in. Nearly 90 percent of scenarios of how to establish a safer temperature in the world involves going backward on emissions, but it is also so far not very realistic, said Kevin Anderson, deputy director of the Tyndall Centre for Climate Change Research in Britain.

Negative emissions involve more forests, maybe seeding the oceans, and possibly technology that sucks carbon out of the air and stores it underground somehow. More biomass or forests require enormous land areas and direct capture of carbon from air is expensive, but with a serious sustained research effort costs can probably be brought below $100 per metric ton, said engineering and policy professor Granger Morgan of Carnegie Mellon University.

AP
The sun sets behind a power plant powered by coal in the Bosnian town of Tuzla, 120 kms north of Sarajevo, Bosnia, Saturday, Dec. 12, 2015.

Leading up to the Paris Agreement, nearly every nation formed an individual action plan to cut or at least slow the growth of carbon pollution over the next decade or so. Richer nations that have already developed, like the United States, Europe and Japan, pledged to cut now. Developing nations that say they need fossil fuels to pull themselves out poverty pledged to slow the rate of growth for now, and to cut later.

"The EU and U.S. are all on Slim-Fast," said Paul Bledsoe, a former Clinton administration climate official. "China's still hitting fast food, but will have to stop soon."

China, the world's top carbon polluter, will eventually have to make the biggest cuts. Overall, for the world to hit its new target, global carbon dioxide emissions will have to peak by 2030, maybe earlier, and then fall to near-zero, experts said. Those levels have been generally rising since the industrial revolution. A new study suggests emissions may have fallen slightly this year, but that may be a blip.

Without any efforts to limit global warming, the world would have warmed by 3.5 degrees Celsius (6.3 degrees Fahrenheit) from now by 2100, according to Climate Interactive. But China's submitted plan alone would cut that projected warming by 1.3 degrees, according to Climate Interactive. The U.S. plan trims about six tenths of a degree of the projected warming without a global deal.

And while China is now the No. 1 carbon dioxide polluter with more than a quarter of the world's emissions, carbon dioxide stays in the air for at least a century, so historical emissions are important. Since 1870, the U.S. is responsible for 18 percent of the world's carbon pollution, compared to 13 percent for China.

That all sounds good, but the goals the nations have set aren't enough. Taken together, they would still allow temperatures to rise 2.5 degrees Celsius (4.5 degrees Fahrenheit) by the end of the century from now, so to reach the goals agreed on this weekend countries will need to do more, Climate Interactive found.

Another climate modeling group, Climate Action Tracker, is slightly more optimistic, but still finds the nations' plans would miss the goal of limiting temperature rise to one more degree. It says the current proposals would allow a rise of 1.7 degrees Celsius (1.25 degrees Fahrenheit).

Countries agreed Saturday to take another look at their goals every five years.

BUSINESS BRIEFS

Japan survey: Business sentiment stable, but outlook weaker

TOKYO (AP)—A survey by Japan's central bank says sentiment among big Japanese manufacturers is steady, though companies in all sectors expect conditions to deteriorate in the coming months. The Bank of Japan's "tankan" survey, released Monday, remained at 12 as of December, unchanged from September. The tankan measures corporate sentiment by subtracting the number of companies saying business conditions are negative from those responding they are positive. The survey for the coming quarter showed both manufacturers and other companies were pessimistic about the outlook for sales and for investment in the world's third-largest economy. Japanese companies have seen their profits soar since Prime Minister Shinzo Abe took office three years ago and initiated a recovery strategy that relies heavily on monetary stimulus. But investment and wages have lagged expectations, slowing growth.

German police search for group that defaced Facebook office

BERLIN (AP)—Police say they are looking for a group of up to 20 people who wrote "Facebook Dislike" on the social media firm's German headquarters in Hamburg. The unidentified group of people also threw paint bombs and damaged doors and windows at the American company's building in Hamburg's Neustadt neighborhood. Police said Sunday that they are asking witnesses who know more about the group to come forward. They said the group attacking the building Saturday night consisted of 15-20 people, who were clad in black and wore facemasks. Police spokesman Joerg Schroeder said the motive was not clear. On the leftist Internet page Linksunten, anonymous authors said they had attacked the building to protest against Facebook's overpowering presence online. The extent of financial damage caused by the vandalism wasn't immediately clear.

Renzi brushes off talk of favoritism in saving Italian banks

ROME (AP)—Italian Premier Matteo Renzi on Sunday dismissed critics who contend his government showed partiality in saving four local banks, including one whose former vice president is the father of his reforms minister. Renzi said tersely that there was "no favoritism at all by the government" behind the measure to rescue the ailing banks with a 4-billion-euro ($4.4 billion) fund established by three large, healthy Italian banks. Finance Minister Pier Carlo Padoan met with a committee of investors on behalf of those who lost money—in many cases an entire life's savings—when they purchased bonds through one of the troubled banks. The committee says far more is needed to help them than the 100-million euro ($110 million) fund being considered for partial reimbursement.

Use disciplinary policy to deal with problem workers

YOUR OFFICE COACH

By MARIE G. MCINTYRE
McClatchy-Tribune News Service

Marie G. McIntyre is a workplace coach and the author of Secrets to Winning at Office Politics. *Send in questions and get free coaching tips at http://www.yourofficecoach.com, or follow her on Twitter @officecoach.*

Q: Two of my employees seem to have absolutely no interest in doing a good job. They arrive late, ignore deadlines, and drag out every task to avoid additional work. If I bring this up, they threaten to call in sick and stay out for several days. Because we work for a large retail chain, their absence would create a lot of problems.

I finally got tired of the ongoing arguments and decided to just leave these two alone. However, their laziness has now begun to create problems with the rest of the staff. My top performers resent having to pick up the slack, while the more marginal employees are starting to copy their behaviors.

When I asked my manager how I should handle this, he didn't have much to say. He told me to follow the company's disciplinary policy, but he never explained how that works. I know I shouldn't tolerate this behavior, but how do I stop it?

A: Since your boss sounds rather apathetic, I'm glad that you grasp the seriousness of this situation. By letting these slackers intimidate you into submission, you have essentially abdicated your leadership role and allowed their slothfulness to infect your entire group. So now it's time to don your supervisory hat and put an end to this blackmail.

Despite his failure to provide much guidance, your manager was correct in his advice. Any large company will have a clearly defined performance management process administered by the human resources department. The HR manager should be able to offer specific suggestions for applying that policy to your troublesome twosome.

Once you and the HR manager have agreed on a plan, go back to your boss and ask for his support in taking the required steps. Given your history with this rebellious pair, getting them in line is likely to require backup from a higher level of management.

Q: "Brittany", one of my employees, recently said that she feels a fellow team member is mad at her. She then asked if I would observe their interactions and give her my opinion. I suggested that perhaps she should simply ask whether anything is wrong, but she feared this might lead to an argument.

Instead, Brittany said that she will continue to be polite to this co-worker and see if the situation improves. Brittany has a history of issues with several team members, including this one, but I thought they had been resolved. How should I handle this?

A: At this point, I think you should just leave it alone. Since Brittany only "feels" that someone is angry, her wait-and-see strategy is probably a good choice. Given her previous issues, this might actually be a sign of progress.

As the manager of a group with a history of drama, you were wise to sidestep Brittany's request for intervention and encourage her to handle the matter independently. Employees who act like squabbling children need to recognize when it's time to grow up.

Nation

Obama aims to allay concerns about terror-fighting strategy

WASHINGTON (AP)—Fears of terrorism are hanging over America's holiday season, so President Barack Obama is planning a series of events this week aimed at trying to allay concerns about his strategy for stopping the Islamic State group abroad and its sympathizers at home.

Obama's visits to the Pentagon and the National Counterterrorism Center are part of a push to further explain his terrorism-fighting strategy, White House officials said, after a prime-time Oval Office address last Sunday that critics said failed to do much to reassure the public. Another goal is to draw a contrast with Republican presidential candidate Donald Trump and his inflammatory remarks about Muslims. The Obama administration has warned Trump's rhetoric emboldens extremists looking to pull the U.S. into a war with Islam.

"Terrorists like ISIL are trying to divide us along lines of religion and background," Obama said Saturday in his weekly radio and Internet address, using an acronym for the extremist group. "That's how they stoke fear. That's how they recruit."

In the coming week, he said, "we'll move forward on all fronts."

AP

President Barack Obama addresses the nation from the Oval Office at the White House in Washington, Sunday night, Dec. 6, 2016.

The public relations campaign, one week before Christmas, comes as the public is jittery about the specter of terrorism after the mass shooting in San Bernardino, California this month and the Paris attacks a few weeks before. Seven in 10 Americans rated the risk of a terrorist attack in the U.S. as at least somewhat high, according to an Associated Press-GfK poll. That was a sharp increase from the 5 in 10 who said that in January.

U.S. officials have insisted there are no specific, credible threats to the United States. But the apparent lack of warning before San Bernardino has fueled concerns about whether the U.S. has a handle on potential attacks, especially during high-profile times such as the end-of-year holidays.

Obama, who is scheduled to leave Friday for his annual family vacation in Hawaii, had to interrupt that trip in 2009 when a would-be attacker tried to blow up a plane on Christmas Day.

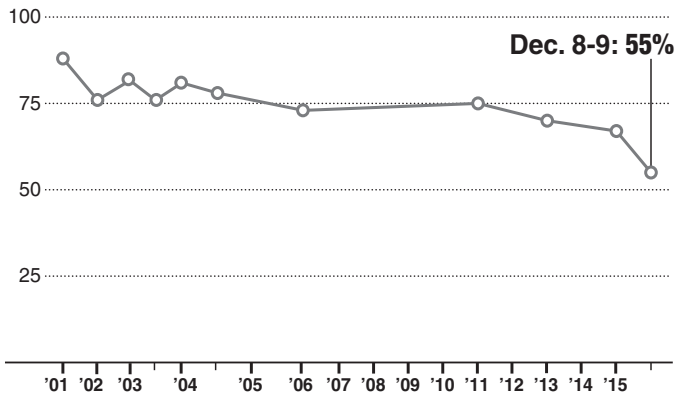
Obama's schedule includes a Monday stop at the Pentagon for a rare meeting outside the White House by his National Security Council, followed by a public update from the president about the fight against IS. White House press secretary Josh Earnest said Obama did not intend to announce any major changes in approach.

"If there's an opportunity for us to intensify efforts behind one aspect of our strategy, then that is something that he wants his team to be prepared to do," Earnest said.

On Thursday, at the National Counterterrorism Center, which analyzes intelligence at its facility in suburban Virginia, Obama plans to address reporters after a briefing by intelligence and security agencies on threat assessments. Obama receives a similar briefing each year before the holidays.

Concerns about extremism emanating from the Middle East have taken center stage in the presidential race. Obama has tried to use his bully pulpit as a counterpoint to GOP front-runner Trump and his widely condemned proposal to bar Muslims from entering the U.S., and to push back on other politicians insisting on halting resettlement of Syrian refugees in the U.S.

Confidence in the U.S. government to protect citizens from terrorism



Source: Gallup Graphic: Tribune News Service

States expanded gun rights after school massacre at Sandy Hook

IOWA CITY, Iowa (AP)—The 2012 massacre at Sandy Hook Elementary School, in which a mentally troubled young man killed 26 children and educators, served as a rallying cry for gun-control advocates across the nation.

But in the three years since, many states have moved in the opposite direction, embracing the National Rifle Association's axiom that more "good guys with guns" are needed to deter mass shootings.

In Kansas, gun owners can now carry concealed weapons without obtaining a license. In Texas, those with permits will soon be able to carry openly in holsters and bring concealed weapons into some college classrooms. And in Arkansas, gun enthusiasts may be able to carry weapons into polling places next year when they vote for president.

Dozens of new state laws have made it easier to obtain guns and carry them in more public places and made it harder for local governments to enact restrictions, according to a review of state legislation by The Associated Press. The number of guns manufactured and sold and the number of permits to carry concealed weapons have also increased, data show.

The trend has been discouraging to some gun-control advocates, even as other states have adopted stricter background checks. Other gun-control supporters say their movement is emboldened by the recent rise of Everytown for Gun Safety, a well-funded group backed by former New York City Mayor Michael Bloomberg that is becoming influential in some state capitols.

The debate over gun rights moved to states after Congress rejected a bill in 2013 that would have expanded background checks to all gun sales, including those at gun shows and over the Internet. The arguments are expected to intensify next year as legislatures convene in the wake of the mass shooting of county government employees in San Bernardino, California, which is being investigated as an act of terrorism.

Recent mass shootings at a Planned Parenthood clinic in Colorado, a community college in Oregon and a church in South Carolina have also reignited passions on both sides.

"Most of our churches are just wide open," said Mississippi Republican Rep. Andy Gipson, who plans to file a bill next year allowing congregations to designate people who could carry guns.

Vandals spray-paint 2 mosques in Southern California

HAWTHORNE, Calif. (AP)—Vandals spray-painted graffiti at two mosques in the Southern California city of Hawthorne and left a device that looked like a hand grenade in the driveway of one of the mosques on Sunday, prompting police to investigate both incidents as a hate crime.

A bomb squad was called, and the area around the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community Baitus-Salaam Mosque was evacuated after the device was discovered around 6:30 a.m., police said in a statement. Investigators determined the device was a plastic replica of a hand grenade. The word "Jesus" was sprayed in white paint on the mosque's fence.

Police received another call that the phrase "Jesus is the way" was spray-painted in front of the Islamic Center of Hawthorne.

Police and the FBI were investigating the vandalism, which appeared to have occurred overnight, as hate crimes.

"This type of behavior is born out of ignorance and fear and we as members of the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community ... we respond with peaceful dialogue," said Ahsan M. Khan, a chapter president of the community.

"It's through peaceful dialogue that we can hopefully see less of this type of hate crime," he said.

On Friday, a mosque in Palm Springs was damaged in a fire that authorities said was intentionally set. They arrested a 23-year-old man in connection with the fire and booked him for investigation of commission of a hate crime, arson, maliciously setting a fire and burglary.

The fire at the Islamic Center of Palm Springs was contained to the small building's front lobby, and no one was injured.

The mosque is about 75 miles from San Bernardino, where a couple who federal officials say were inspired by Islamist extremists opened fire Dec. 2 at a holiday luncheon and killed 14 people. Some Muslims in Southern California and beyond have worried about the potential for reprisals, while leaders of various faiths have called for tolerance.

Police: Man fatally shot by LA deputies kept holding gun

LOS ANGELES (AP)—A black man who was fatally shot by Los Angeles County Sheriff's deputies kept holding a gun as he lay dying on the ground, authorities said Sunday in response to questions about why they continued to fire on the man after he fell to the pavement.

A close-up from security footage showed 28-year-old Nicholas Robertson stretched out on the ground with a gun in his hand. He died at the scene Saturday morning in the south Los Angeles suburb of Lynwood.

Two deputies fired 33 bullets at the man after he refused to drop the gun and walked across a busy street to a filling station where a family member was pumping gas, homicide Capt. Steven Katz said.

"When he collapsed, his arms were underneath him, and the gun was still in his hand. There was never a time when the weapon was not in his possession," Katz said.

Asked if the officers were white, Katz said no but would not elaborate. He said one had been working in the field for about a year, the other for about 18 months.

Police confronted Robertson as they investigated 911 calls from witnesses who saw a man firing a gun into the air. Witnesses said he was walking down a residential street and then through a busy commercial area holding the weapon and acting strangely.

Witnesses told authorities that Robertson reportedly fired six to seven rounds and briefly went into a car wash and a pizza parlor before deputies arrived.

Deputies spotted the man in front of the gas station, where two women and three children were inside a car, and they ordered him to drop the gun, Katz said. But he refused and at one point pointed the gun in the deputies' direction, Katz added.

The gun was not registered to Robertson and has not been reported stolen. Detectives are trying to track it, Katz said.

Robertson may have been in a dispute at home with his spouse before he went out on the street, but authorities have yet to verify that report, Katz said.

Video, apparently from a cellphone, appeared on several media sites. It appears to show deputies firing about two dozen bullets, including several rounds after Robertson falls and is crawling on the ground.

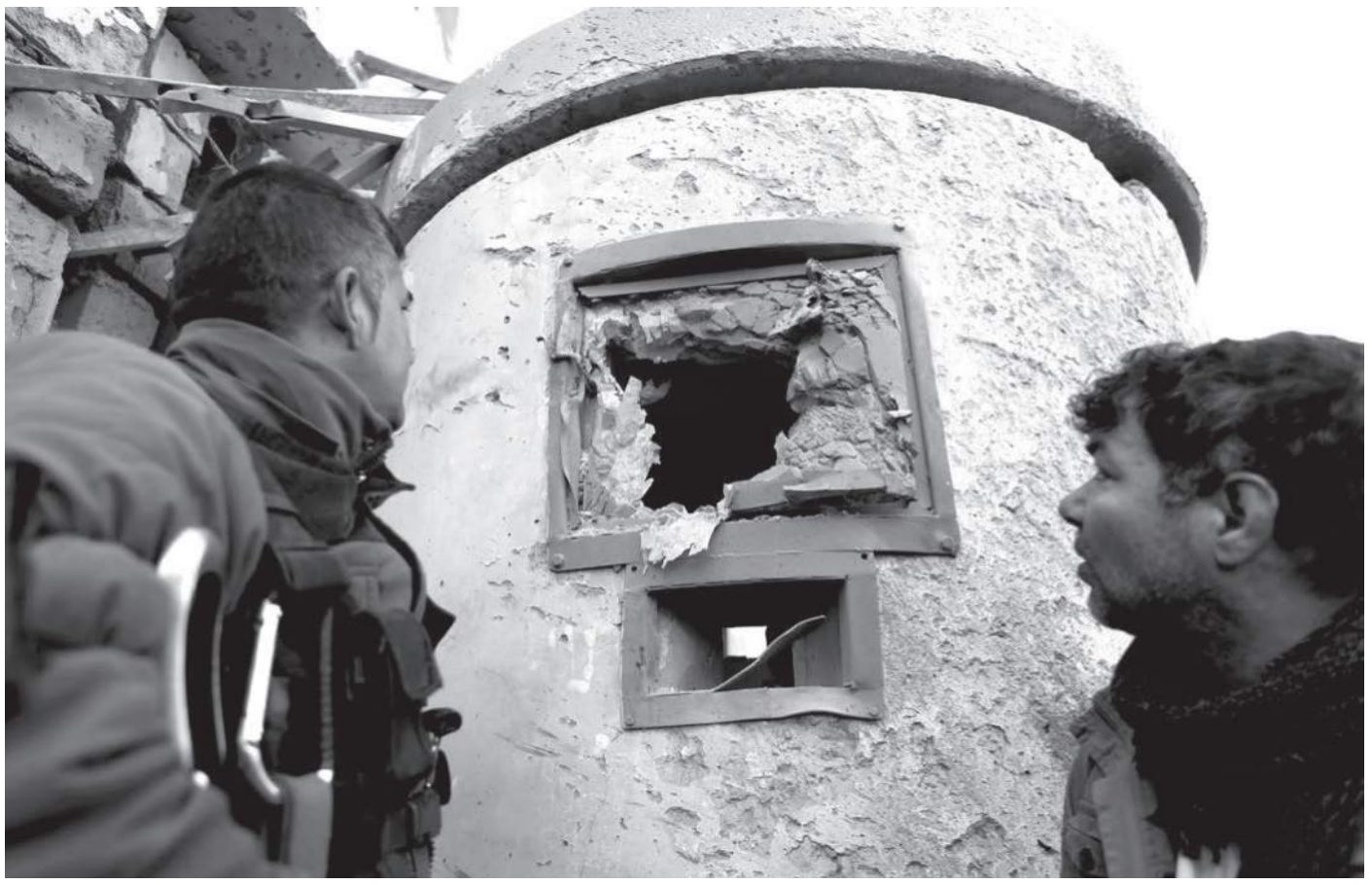
"They shot him in his shoulder, and he was crawling," Pamela Brown, Robertson's mother-in-law, told Los Angeles television station KCAL. "He left three kids behind, two daughters and a son. What, they could have Tasered him or anything."

Asia

Spain: Gunmen entered embassy in Kabul after car bomb attack

KABUL, Afghanistan (AP)—Attackers entered the Spanish Embassy in Kabul after a deadly car bombing in a diplomatic neighborhood of the Afghan capital, engaging in an hour-long shootout with security forces while staff hid in bunkers, the Spanish government said Saturday in an account of the attack a day earlier.

Sediq Sediqqi, spokesman for the Afghan Interior Ministry, said four Afghan police officers and two others, including a foreigner, were killed in the attack that was claimed by the Taliban. Authorities in Madrid said two Spanish police officers were killed. The discrepancy could not immediately be clarified.



AP

Afghan security personnel inspect the damage to the Spanish Embassy in Kabul, Afghanistan, Saturday, Dec. 12, 2015.

According to a statement issued Saturday by Spanish Prime Minister Mariano Rajoy's office, a powerful car bomb exploded Friday evening near the embassy, "causing serious damage to the premises" and killing Deputy-Inspector Jorge Garcia Tudela and Isidro Gabino Sanmartin Hernandez who were guarding the compound.

An hour-long shootout followed, the statement said. During the gun battle, three attackers entered the embassy compound while staff hid in two bunkers. They were released unharmed "after an intervention by Afghan and United States special forces units that lasted several hours," the statement said.

"All details of the attack are under investigation, although a statement by the attackers said that the embassy was not the intended target of their attack," the Spanish government said.

The incident caused confusion in Spain, as Rajoy initially insisted to reporters Friday on live TV just ahead of a campaign election rally that the embassy had not come under attack.

He also said the only Spaniard hurt was a slightly wounded police officer who had been taken to a hospital but was expected to recover. Rajoy later acknowledged during the rally that a policeman died, and hours afterward the government announced the death of the second officer.

There was no government confirmation until Saturday that the embassy grounds had been penetrated.

Seven civilians and two policemen were wounded, Sediqqi said, adding that 12 foreign citizens were rescued by Afghan forces.

Zabihullah Mujahid, spokesman for the Taliban, claimed responsibility for the attack in an email sent to media outlets.

The attack took place in the Kabul district of Shir Pur, home to many foreign embassies, guesthouses and the homes of high-ranking government officials. It took local security forces more than 10 hours to bring the area back under control.

The Kabul attack came two days after another massive Taliban attack on the main airport in the southern city of Kandahar, which lasted more than 24 hours and killed more than 50 people. The casualties from the Kandahar attack, which ended Wednesday night, included 38 civilians, 10 Afghan soldiers and two police officers, according to the Ministry of Defense.

Separately, a district chief was shot and killed by insurgents in the northern province of Baghlan, said Jawed Basharat, spokesman for the provincial police chief.

Abdul Jabar, chief of the Borka district, came under attack on the main road near Puli Khumri, the provincial capital. Basharat said that Jabar's driver and two of his bodyguards were abducted by the insurgents and police forces were searching for them.

Australia court: UK company misled consumers over painkiller

SYDNEY (AP)—An Australian court on Monday ordered Nurofen's owner to stop selling several versions of the popular painkiller that were identical to its standard ibuprofen pills but nearly twice as expensive.

The Federal Court ruled that British consumer goods company Reckitt Benckiser deceived Australians by selling Nurofen painkillers that were marketed to relieve specific ailments, such as back pain, when all of the products contained an identical amount of the same active ingredient, ibuprofen lysine.

Australia's consumer watchdog launched the court action in March, arguing that consumers were being tricked into thinking that the four products—Nurofen Back Pain, Nurofen Period Pain, Nurofen Migraine Pain and Nurofen Tension Headache—were designed to treat a specific type of pain, when in fact, they were all the same.

"None of the four products is any more or less effective than the others in treating any of the particular symptoms," Justice James Edelman wrote in his judgment.

Edelman gave Reckitt Benckiser three months to remove the products from Australian stores. The company markets a variety of health and household goods in Australia.

Reckitt Benckiser referred calls requesting comment to its Nurofen unit, which said it would comply with the order and replace the products with new packaging that clearly states the drugs are equally effective at treating other forms of pain.

"The Nurofen specific-pain range was launched with an intention to help consumers navigate their pain relief options, particularly within the grocery environment where there is no health care professional to assist decision making," Nurofen spokeswoman Montse Pena said in a statement. "Nurofen did not set out to mislead consumers."

Chinese rights lawyer stands trial for social media posts

BEIJING (AP)—Prominent rights lawyer Pu Zhiqiang went on trial Monday on charges of provoking trouble with commentaries on social media that were critical of the ruling Communist Party.

Police pushed journalists away from the entrance of the 2nd Beijing Intermediate People's Court as Pu stood trial in a case that international rights groups have criticized as political persecution. Pu has been active in defending free speech, and represented dissident artist Ai Weiwei in a tax evasion case that Ai's supporters said was politically motivated.

Since coming to power in 2013, President Xi Jinping has spearheaded crackdowns on civil activists, rights lawyers and online freedom of expression, in moves aimed at snuffing out any potential threats to the Communist Party's grip on power.

The lawyer was detained shortly after attending a May 2014 meeting to discuss commemorating 25 years since the Tiananmen Square massacre, at a time when authorities were keeping a lid on any public commemorations of the event. Hundreds, possibly thousands, of protesters were killed, and the topic remains taboo in China.

The charges against Pu relate to a number of posts on China's Twitter-like Sina Weibo that questioned the ruling Communist Party's policies toward the Tibetan and Uighur (pronounced WEE-gur) ethnic minorities in the Tibet and Xinjiang regions, and mocked political figures.

Rights groups have said he faces up to eight years in prison.

Patrick Poon, China researcher at Amnesty International, called Pu's trial "an act of political persecution."

"He is being punished solely for standing up to the Chinese government in his courageous defense of human rights," he said.

Amnesty International says there have been "repeated procedural irregularities" in his prosecution, including a prolonged pre-trial detention, denial of adequate medical care and prosecutors refusing to disclose evidence against him to his defense lawyers.

Pu also was instrumental in pushing for the eventual abolishment of the labor camp system, which allowed police to lock up people for up to four years without a trial.

ASIAN BRIEFS

After election win, Suu Kyi gets to work cleaning up Myanmar

KAWHMU, Myanmar (AP)—Following her party's landmark election win, Myanmar opposition leader Aung San Suu Kyi vowed to give her desperately poor country a much-needed face-lift. Wearing plastic gloves, the septuagenarian got to it early Sunday, walking along the edge of an old, pot-holed road in her constituency, Kawhmu, picking up discarded water bottles, plastic bags and instant coffee wrappers. Villagers rushed to help, filling up their own big sacks with garbage. Myanmar emerged from a half-century of brutal military rule in 2011, but years of mismanagement, combined with international sanctions and isolation, had turned it into one of the world's poorest and most neglected nations. The infrastructure is in shambles and public services, including trash collection and recycling, is virtually nonexistent.

Bomb in market kills 22 Shiites in Pakistani tribal region

ISLAMABAD (AP)—A bomb explosion in a market on Sunday killed 22 minority Shiite Muslims and wounded 45 others in Pakistan's Kurram tribal region near the Afghan border, officials said. The bomb exploded as the market in the town of Parachinar was crowded with shoppers buying warm clothes for winter, said Mahtab Hussain, a local government official. Husain said some of the critically wounded people were airlifted to hospitals in other cities. All 22 killed were minority Shiite Muslims, said another local government official, Nek Mohammad. The explosion was caused by a remote-controlled bomb planted in the market, the two officials said.

Thousands evacuated as typhoon slams into PH

MANILA, Philippines (AP)—Thousands of residents evacuated as Typhoon Melor slammed into the eastern Philippines, where flood- and landslide-prone communities are bracing for destructive winds, heavy rains and coastal floods of up to 4 meters (13 feet), officials said Monday. Classes and flights were suspended. The government's weather bureau said the typhoon is packing winds of 150 kilometers (95 miles) per hour and gusts of 185 kph (115 mph), and carrying heavy to intense rains within its 300-kilometer (185-mile) diameter. It made landfall Monday morning in tiny Batag Island in the eastern Philippines, and a second landfall is expected in Sorsogon province. Bernardo Alejandro, a regional civil defense official, said thousands of residents were evacuated in the six provinces comprising the Bicol region, and that relief goods had been put in place. In Sorsogon, he said, more than 700 people voluntarily went to shelters Sunday night, but the provincial governor then ordered evacuations Monday for residents who had refused to leave their homes despite the risks of floods and landslides. About 120,000 Sorsogon residents live in the typhoon-affected area, and many are expected to move in with neighbors or relatives with homes on higher ground during the flooding.

World

Saudi voters elect 20 women candidates for the first time

RIYADH, Saudi Arabia (AP)—Saudi voters elected 20 women for local government seats, according to results released to The Associated Press on Sunday, a day after women voted and ran in elections for the first time in the country's history.

The women who won hail from vastly different parts of the country, ranging from Saudi Arabia's largest city to a small village near Islam's holiest site.

The 20 female candidates represent just one percent of the roughly 2,100 municipal council seats up for grabs, but even limited gains are seen as a step forward for women who had previously been completely shut out of elections. Women are still not allowed to drive and are governed by guardianship laws that give men final say over aspects of their lives like marriage, travel and higher education.

Though there are no quotas for female council members, an additional 1,050 seats are appointed with approval by the king who could use his powers to ensure more women are represented.

Around 7,000 candidates, among them 979 women, competed in the election for a seat on the municipal councils, which are the only government body elected by Saudi citizens. The two previous rounds of voting for the councils, in 2005 and 2011, were open to men only.

The conservative capital of Riyadh saw the most women candidates win, with four elected. The Eastern Province, where minority Shiites are concentrated, saw two women elected, said Hamad Al-Omar, who heads the General Election Commission's media council.

AP

Saudi women vote at a polling center during the municipal elections, in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, Saturday, Dec. 12, 2015.

Saudi Arabia's second largest and most cosmopolitan city, Jiddah, also elected two women, as did one of the most conservative regions, Qassim.

The mayor of the city of Mecca, Osama al-Bar, told the AP that a woman won in a village called Madrakah, about 93 miles (150 kilometers) north of the city which houses the cube-shaped Kaaba to which Muslims around the world pray.

Another woman won in Medina, where the Prophet Muhammad's first mosque was built.

Other women hailing from the kingdom's northernmost areas won, with two elected in Tabuk, one in al-Jawf and another in Hail. Additionally, a woman won in Saudi Arabia's southern border area of Jizan, another in Asir and two won in al-Ahsa.

Many women candidates ran on platforms that promised more nurseries to offer longer daycare hours for working mothers, the creation of youth community centers with sports and cultural activities, improved roads, better garbage collection and overall greener cities.

In October, the Saudi Gazette reported that harsh road conditions and long distances to the nearest hospital had forced some women in the village of Madrakah, where one female candidate was elected, to give birth in cars. The local newspaper reported that the closest hospital and the nearest university were in Mecca, prompting some students to forgo attending classes. The article said residents were also frustrated with the lack of parks in the village.

It is precisely these kinds of community issues that female candidates hope to address once elected to the municipal councils. The councils do not have legislative powers, but advise authorities and help oversee local budgets.

Most ran their campaigns online, using social media to get the word out, due to strict gender segregation rules that ban men and women from mixing in public. This meant candidates could not directly address voters of the opposite sex.

Libyans urged to accept cease-fire, embrace UN unity plan

ROME (AP)—Diplomats trying to help Libya emerge from the chaos that terrorists have exploited said Sunday that rival political factions in the North African country need to accept an immediate cease-fire and embrace a U.N.-brokered plan aimed at creating a "secure, democratic, prosperous and unified state."

"We refuse to stand by and watch a vacuum filled by terrorists because all of us are unwilling to do what's necessary to help people who want their freedom, want their independence, want their country back," U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry said after a conference that drew officials from 17 countries, the European Union, the African Union, the Arab League and the United Nations, as well as 15 Libyan leaders.

Members of Libya's two rival parliaments are set to sign the agreement, mediated by U.N. special envoy Martin Kobler during a session Friday in Tunisia, at a ceremony Wednesday in Morocco.

Libya slid into chaos following the 2011 toppling and killing of dictator Moammar Gadhafi. Since then, it has been torn between an internationally recognized government in eastern Tobruk and an Islamist-backed government in the capital, Tripoli, and now faces threats from Islamic State extremists.

IS is trying to extend its influence beyond areas it now controls, including the city of Sirte. The envisioned government of national accord is seen as critically important to help restore security and mobilize international support to counter the extremists.

The plan for a national unity government "is not something being sprung on the people of Libya," said Kerry, who hosted the conference with Italian Foreign Minister Paolo Gentiloni.

"This has been developed by Libyans" through lengthy negotiations and "deserves to breathe the air of a future and of freedom and of possibilities."

Gentiloni has pressed other countries to move faster and with more urgency on Libya, which lies just across the Mediterranean from Italy's southern shores. "The commitment taken by all today can really be a turning point in a crisis that has dragged on for so long, with all the risks that that carries for all of us," he said.

A joint statement issued after the conference urged "all parties to accept an immediate, comprehensive cease-fire in all parts of Libya" and pledged economic, security and counterterrorism assistance for the unity government.

WORLD BRIEFS

Russian destroyer wards off Turkish fishing ship in Aegean

MOSCOW (AP)—A Russian destroyer used small arms fire on Sunday to ward off a Turkish fishing ship and prevent a collision in the Aegean Sea, the Defense Ministry said, calling the actions of Turkey's vessel "provocative." The guided missile destroyer Smetlivy was unable to establish radio contact with the approaching Turkish seiner, which also failed to respond to visual signals and flares, the ministry said in a statement. So when the Koroglu Balikcilik was 600 meters (660 yards) away, warning shots were fired from the destroyer and the Turkish ship quickly changed course, passing within 540 meters (590 yards). Tensions between Moscow and Ankara have been heightened since a Turkey downed a Russian warplane along the Syrian border last month, and this could further strain relations.

Kenya offcial: 1 soldier dies, 2 wounded by Islamic rebels

MANDERA, Kenya (AP)—A Kenyan official says Somalia's Islamic extremist insurgents al-Shabab have ambushed an army truck killing one soldier and wounding two. Mandera County Commissioner Fredrick Shisia said Sunday the soldiers were travelling to Mandera town, in Kenya's north, from Nairobi when they were ambushed by al-Shabab fighters between Elwak and Lafey towns. Shesia said the area of attack is close to Kenya's border with Somalia making it easy for the attackers to move back into Somalia before Kenyan military reinforcements arrived at the scene.

French far right collapses in regional runoff elections

PARIS (AP)—Marine Le Pen's far-right National Front collapsed in French regional elections Sunday, failing to take a single region after dominating the first round of voting, pollsters projected. The conservatives surged against the governing Socialists, changing the political map of France. The failure of the National Front to gain any of the six regions where it was leading didn't stop the anti-immigration party from looking to the 2017 presidential election—Le Pen's ultimate goal. Le Pen had been riding high after extremist attacks and an unprecedented wave of migration into Europe, and the party came out on top in the voting in France's 13 newly drawn regions in the first round a week ago. But projections by France's major polling firms suggested the party lost in all of the regions Sunday, including decisive losses for both Le Pen and her popular niece.

Fire at Russian mental patients' home kills 23, injures 23

MOSCOW (AP)—A fire swept through a Russian home for people with mental illnesses, killing 23 patients and injuring another 23, many of whom were on medication or otherwise unable to walk, the emergency services said Sunday.

The remaining 24 patients were safely evacuated, including some who had to be carried out of the building, and the four medical personnel working at the home were unhurt, they said.

The fire raised additional concern in Russia because it followed two similar fires in 2013 that took the lives of 75 people. After those fires, the government had promised to improve fire safety at institutions for psychiatric patients.

Investigators have not yet determined the cause of this weekend's fire, which broke out late Saturday in Alferovka, a village in the Voronezh region about 600 kilometers (350 miles) south of Moscow. The fire in the one-story brick building was extinguished shortly after 3 a.m. (0000 GMT) Sunday.

The fire started in a section of the home dedicated to patients who were unable to walk, emergency services official Igor Kobzev said on Russian state television. He said 39 of the patients in the home could not walk.

All of the patients at the Novokhopersky Neuropsychiatric Home were men and those who died were aged between 46 and 78, according to a list released by the emergency services. Those who were evacuated were placed in a nearby home for elderly and disabled people.

Emergencies Minister Vladimir Puchkov flew to the scene and praised the medical staff and rescuers for saving so many of the patients.

"They carried out 18 people who were sleeping and under the effects of strong medication," he said.

Russia has a poor fire safety record with about 12,000 fire deaths reported in 2012. By comparison, the U.S., with a population roughly double Russia's, recorded around 3,000 fire deaths in 2011.

Focus

AP

In this Sept. 17, 2015 photo, pipes are used to blend water from a well at the location with treated water from other sources in Modesto, Calif. T

Fear at the tap: Uranium contaminates water in the West

By ELLEN KNICKMEYER and SCOTT SMITH
ASSOCIATED PRESS

FRESNO, Calif. (AP)—In a trailer park tucked among irrigated orchards that help make California's San Joaquin Valley the richest farm region in the world, 16-year-old Giselle Alvarez, one of the few English-speakers in the community of farmworkers, puzzles over the notices posted on front doors: There's a danger in their drinking water.

Uranium, the notices warn, tests at a level considered unsafe by federal and state standards. The law requires the park's owners to post the warnings. But they are awkwardly worded and in English, a language few of the park's dozens of Spanish-speaking families can read.

"It says you can drink the water—but if you drink the water over a period of time, you can get cancer," said Alvarez, whose working-class family has no choice but keep drinking and cooking with the tainted tap water daily, as they have since Alvarez was just learning to walk. "They really don't explain."

Uranium, the stuff of nuclear fuel for power plants and atom bombs, increasingly is showing in drinking water systems in major farming regions of the U.S. West—a naturally occurring but unexpected byproduct of irrigation, of drought, and of the overpumping of natural underground water reserves.

An Associated Press investigation in California's central farm valleys—along with the U.S. Central Plains, among the areas most affected—found authorities are doing little to inform the public at large of the growing risk.

That includes the one out of four families on private wells in this farm valley who, unknowingly, are drinking dangerous amounts of uranium, researchers determined this year and last. Government authorities say long-term exposure to uranium can damage kidneys and raise cancer risks, and scientists say it can have other harmful effects.

In this swath of farmland, roughly 250 miles long and encompassing major cities, up to one in 10 public water systems have raw drinking water with uranium levels that exceed federal and state safety standards, the U.S. Geological Survey has found.

More broadly, nearly 2 million people in California's Central Valley and in the U.S. Midwest live within a half-mile of groundwater containing uranium over the safety standards, University of Nebraska researchers said in a study published in September.

Everything from state agencies to tiny rural schools are scrambling to deal with hundreds of tainted public wells—more regulated than private wells under safe-drinking-water laws.

That includes water wells at the Westport Elementary School, where 450 children from rural families study outside the Central California farm hub of Modesto.

At Westport's playground, schoolchildren take a break from tether ball to sip from fountains marked with Spanish and English placards: "SAFE TO DRINK."

The school, which draws on its own wells for its drinking fountains, sinks and cafeteria, is one of about 10 water systems in the farm region that have installed uranium removal facilities in recent years. Prices range from $65,000 for the smallest system to the millions of dollars.

Just off Westport's playground, a school maintenance chief jangles the keys to the school's treatment operation, locked in a shed the size of a garage. Inside, a system of tubes, dials and canisters resembling large scuba tanks removes up to a pound a year of uranium from the school's wells.

The uranium gleaned from the school's well water and other Central California water systems is handled like the nuclear material it is—taken away by workers in masks, gloves and other protective garments, said Ron Dollar, a vice president at Water Remediation Technology, a Colorado-based firm.

It is then processed into nuclear fuel for power plants, Dollar said.

Before treatment, Westport's water tests up to four times state and federal limits. After treatment, it's safe for the children, teachers and staff to drink.

Other Central California farm schools opt to buy bottled water in place of drinking fountains, which are off limits because of uranium and other contaminants.

"We don't have a choice," said Terri Lancaster, principal of the 260 students at Waukena elementary school in rural Tulare County. "You do what you have to do."

Until winning a state grant to pay for trucked-in drinking water, her school was spending $10,000 a year from its general fund on bottled water.

Meanwhile, the city of Modesto, with a half-million residents, recently spent more than $500,000 to start blending water from one contaminated well to dilute the uranium to safe levels. The city has retired a half-dozen other wells with excess levels of uranium.

State officials don't track spending on uranium-contaminated wells. But the state's Water Resources Control Board identified at least $16.7 million the state has spent since 2010 helping public water systems deal with high levels of uranium.

In coming years, more public water systems likely will be compelled to invest in such costly fixes, said Miranda Fram, a researcher with the U.S. Geological Survey in Sacramento.

Fram and colleagues at USGS have taken the lead over the past decade in identifying the problem in farm centers including Central California, which produces a quarter of the country's agriculture.

Geologists and water experts are still piecing together the ways levels of uranium exceeding federal and state health standards are seeping into more public water systems and household wells in major farm areas.

Fram and her colleagues believe the amount of uranium increased in Central Valley drinking water supplies over the last 150 years with the spread of farming.

In California, as in the Rockies, mountain snowmelt washes uranium-laden sediment to the flatlands, where groundwater is used to irrigate crops.

Irrigation allows year-round farming, and the irrigated plants naturally create a weak acid that is leeching more and more uranium from sediment, said Fram and Bryant Jurgens, a fellow researcher at the federal agency's office in California's capital.

Groundwater pumping pulls the contaminated water down into the earth, where it is tapped by wells that supply drinking water.

California is now experiencing its driest four-year span on record, and farmers and other users are pumping groundwater at the highest rates ever, helping to pull yet more uranium into areas of aquifers tapped by water wells.

"This has been a decades-long process that has occurred," Jurgens said.

And even if authorities were to intervene to somehow curb uranium contamination—and no such effort is under way—"we expect that it's going to take many decades to reverse this," Jurgens said.

The USGS calculates that the average level of uranium in public-supply wells of the eastern San Joaquin Valley increased 17 percent from 1990 to the mid-2000s. The number of public-supply wells with unsafe levels of uranium, meantime, climbed from 7 percent to 10 percent over the same period there.

But the problem remains so unpublicized that even Fresno County farmer Mark Sorensen—who grows grapes and blueberries in one of the most impacted parts of the country, and deals with water issues routinely as a leader of the local farm bureau—admits to not knowing about it.

"To be honest, I have never spoken to anybody about uranium," said Sorensen, a fifth-generation farmer. "I've never even heard of it in drinking water."

Scientists have long known that uranium can damage kidneys and increase the risks of cancer when consumed over a year or more, which is why authorities have set maximum levels for drinking water.

Drinking water tainted by uranium is the chief concern—but uranium also sticks to potatoes, radishes and other root vegetables if they're not properly washed. (While studies have confirmed livestock and people can ingest high levels of uranium by eating contaminated vegetation, scientists have yet to fully research the dangers involved.)

Though people think mainly about uranium's radioactivity, the danger in water mainly comes from the toxic chemical effects of the metal.

Old public health models for uranium date back to the U.S. uranium boom of the 1940s and 1950s, when the U.S. Atomic Energy Commission set off a nuclear-age mining boom in the Central Valley and other points West as the country sought to build uranium stockpiles. Countless miners succumbed to cancer from breathing radioactive gas.

But those models now need revising to deal with the larger population exposed through sources like drinking water, academics say.

"We should not have any doubts as to whether drinking water with uranium in it is a problem or not. It is," said Doug Brugge, professor of public health and community medicine at Tufts University School of Medicine in Boston. "The larger the population that's drinking this water, the more people that are going to be affected."

Because "there has not been an appreciation of the number of people exposed, it has received a lot less attention" than it should, said researcher Johnnye Lewis at the University of New Mexico, which along with Brugge's team is studying the health impacts of uranium on communities.

Research teams at Tufts and the University of New Mexico also link long-term exposure to signs of reproductive and genetic damage, among other problems.

In California, changes in water standards since the late 2000s have mandated testing for uranium in public water systems, and the state frequently helps public water systems deal with wells testing at high levels.

For private well owners and small water systems, however, officials were unable to point to any public health campaigns in the most-affected areas or any help with testing or dealing with wells that do test for high levels.

USGS researchers recently sampled 170 domestic water wells in the San Joaquin Valley, and found 20 to 25 percent bore uranium at levels that broke federal and state limits.

State and federal regulators say the U.S. Congress, outlining drinking water standards, has limited their enforcement authority to public water systems. "Your home's your castle. If you've got a well at home, that's your business," said Bruce Macler, a San Francisco-based water program toxicologist for the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency.

Uranium is on the radar of California water officials, but the officials are paying more attention to other farming-related contaminants, including nitrates, as well as simply having enough water in the fourth year of the state's drought, said John Borkovich, head of water quality at the state Water Resources Control Board.

"When it comes to private domestic wells, we do what we can to get the word out," Borkovich said. "It's safe to say that there's always more that can be done."

The Associated Press commissioned sampling of wells at five homes in the countryside outside Modesto, to look more closely at whether unregulated private wells that families depend on were as vulnerable as contaminated public water systems nearby.

The results: Water from two of the five wells contained dangerous levels of uranium.

None of the five families, however, had ever heard that uranium could be a problem in groundwater—let alone that it was a problem in their area.

"That's something I'm sure a lot of people are unaware of," said Reyna Rico, whose rural home overlooking farm fields had a well that tested three times the federal and state health limits.

"It would be nice to be informed, so we can make an informed decision, and those wells can be tested," said a resident nearby, Michelle Norleen, who was relieved to know that her own water—unlike those of two of her neighbors—tested below the limits in the AP sampling.

Even for bigger water systems for which government help is available, accessing safe water doesn't always come quickly. That's true at the Double L Mobile Ranch outside Fresno, where Giselle Alvarez lives in the one-room trailer with her mother and father.

Overdrive

2016 Honda Civic takes its cues from European models

By CHARLES FLEMING
LOS ANGELES TIMES

Temperate and moderate in every way, the newly designed 2016 Honda Civic—the 10th generation, and the most advanced version in the model's 42-year history—took its styling cues from Europe.

"In the past, we targeted other compacts in the U.S. market—and the last one didn't do so well with the critics," said Honda senior product planner Michael Willrich. "This time we decided to target European benchmarks. This is a global car. We wanted to raise the style quotient and the fun-to-drive factor."

Trying to be more like a BMW or Audi, and less like a Camry or a 2015 Civic, the reborn sedan is longer, lower and wider. The sportier-looking body has a longer hood and shorter rear overhang. The sportier handling is crisp.

Under the hood is something sportier too—a new 1.5-liter turbocharged engine, the Civic's first turbo, which makes 174 horsepower and 162 pound-feet of torque, up from the earlier vehicle's 133 and 129.

While base LX and EX models of the new Civic sedan can still be had with a non-turbo, four-cylinder engine, the turbo improves horsepower and torque while also getting slightly better fuel economy.

Honda has already introduced the two-door Civic coupe. It will add to that and this four-door sedan three more models, the hatchback, SI, and R versions. (The latter will probably come with a 2.0-liter turbo engine, Willrich said.) The coupe comes in three trim levels, the sedan in five, from the entry-level LX to the top-of-the-line Touring.

Though it has held the line on price—the 2016 LX model costs only $150 more than the 2015—Honda has dropped into the Civics a number of amenities usually associated with more expensive cars.

Standard on the high-end Touring trim level are push-button start, leather upholstery, heated seats and even rain-sensitive windshield wipers. The on-board communication system can accommodate both Apple CarPlay and Google's Android Auto. Honda's Sensing Package includes adaptive cruise control, assisted collision braking, lane departure warnings and other safety features.

For people who—like me—are too old, too stiff-necked or simply too lazy to turn around when they make a lane change, the 7-inch display screen even broadcasts a side- and rear-view picture when you hit the right-turn signal.

On the road, the Civic feels competent and steady, quiet on the freeway but comfortable in the canyons. It's not a car you'd want to take onto the track. The small motor, paired with Honda's continuously variable transmission, makes the Civic sound at times more like a kitchen appliance than a car.

But on the streets it's a pleasure to drive. The 106-inch wheelbase and tight turning radius make it easy to navigate and extremely easy to park.

Inside, everything is logical—within reach, uncluttered, unconfusing. There might be too much happening on the steering wheel, where tiny buttons to operate the audio system compete for space with even tinier buttons for making phone calls, sending texts and changing the information on the dashboard display.

Honda says the Civic is "bi-modal," which according to Willrich means it is expected to appeal both to young consumers who might be buying their first automobile and older buyers who might be emptying the nest and downsizing to a smaller vehicle.

Willrich declined to name nameplates, but he said he hoped the remade Civic would steal some customers not just from traditional rival Toyota but also from some European brands.

"It was always a two-horse race between us and our competitors up the street, but we do believe we are going to catch buyers from other manufacturers," Willrich said. "There is a bigger buyer pool out there."

Decades ago, Civic was Honda. Then came the Accord, which became the company's top seller. But sales of the Accord and Civic have both suffered as American car buyers have flocked increasingly to compact SUVs. Both lines have lost buyers to Honda's CR-V.

But the stalwart Civic has sold consistently well, moving 300,000 units or more in 13 of the last 15 years. It will get near that number for 2015.

It remains to be seen whether buyers still attracted by the great fuel economy will be impressed by the Civic's new European wardrobe, or whether the chic exterior will attract buyers who care more about styling than economy.

Either way, the car's 10th iteration is a vast improvement over the ninth, and bodes well for Civic sales in 2016. Issuing its November auto sales numbers earlier this week, Honda reported Civic sales up 8.6 percent, an early reflection of the new model's renewed popularity.

LOS ANGELES TIMES/TNS

On the road, the 2016 Honda Civic feels competent and steady, quiet on the freeway but comfortable in the canyons.

LOS ANGELES TIMES/TNS

The 2016 Honda Civic Touring model with all the options comes to over $27,000. The base MSRP is $18,640.

NUTS & BOLTS

2016 HONDA CIVIC SEDAN

- **Quick take:** Economical, affordable, dependable
- **Highs:** Peppy, fuel-sipping people mover
- **Lows:** Even with new Euro styling, a bit bland
- **Vehicle type:** Four-door, five-seat sedan
- **Base price:** $19,475
- **Price as tested:** $27,335
- **Powertrain:** 1.5-liter turbocharged 4-cylinder engine
- **Transmission:** Honda CVT
- **Horsepower:** 174
- **Torque:** 162 pound-feet
- **Zero to 60 mph:** N/A
- **EPA fuel economy rating:** 31 mpg city/42 highway/35 combined

UNDER THE HOOD

What transmission fluid should I use?

By BRAD BERGHOLDT
TRIBUNE NEWS SERVICE

Q I own a 1998 Toyota 4Runner. The owner's manual calls for the use of Dexron III transmission fluid. I normally do a quick drain and refill of the transmission fluid every 12,000 miles. All the transmission fluid I now see on the market is labeled for both Dexron and Mercon use. Is it safe to use this fluid in an automobile that uses only Dexron III fluid?—Tom Zlakowski

A Good question, Tom! This is a confusing and controversial subject. Dexron III was General Motor's recommended automatic transmission fluid from 1993 until they replaced it in 2006 with Dexron VI and suspended licensing agreements for oil companies to make and sell III. Quite a few other vehicle manufacturers adopted the use of Dexron III fluid as well. Mercon was Ford's fluid of choice from 1987 through 2007, when it was replaced by Mercon V and licensing for the older Mercon was suspended.

Dexron III and Mercon are similar enough that many oil companies market the multi-vehicle fluids you've seen, which no longer have manufacturer oversight. Some in the industry are fine with this, while others express concern. Dexron VI has many significant improvements and is backwards-compatible with Dexron III transmissions, although GM stops short of recommending it for other manufacturer's vehicles. Yikes!

I consulted with my transmission guru, John Strenfeld, about what fluid is best for your 4Runner. The first thing he said was, "How large is his wallet?" I gulped, he chuckled, and said, "Dex VI is the coolest thing ever except for the high price (about double that of Dexron III/Mercon)!"

John's favorite feature of Dexron VI is its greatly enhanced viscosity stability, which is important for electronic control solenoids to function reliably. You can add the new fluid incrementally or all at once. Don't forget to renew the in-pan transmission filter periodically.

Q I have a 2003 Chevrolet Silverado showing a particular diagnostic trouble code. I have changed the gas cap, the gas tank sensor, both vent valve solenoids, the charcoal canister and passed a smoke test. Would a Chevy dealer have a more detailed tester to isolate the fault?—Al

A The dealer's service info may be more important than its tools! GM issued a service bulletin in 2008 addressing trouble codes occurring in 1999-2008 trucks, particularly those driven in dusty conditions.

The bulletin recommends, after confirming a faulty vent solenoid issue, installing a service kit. The kit is a replacement vent solenoid that is sealed, mounted in a new location, and draws air from a remotely mounted filter box. Since you've already renewed the vent solenoid with no success, it's possible dirt has built up in the vent circuit hoses. They should be flushed out or renewed.

The aforementioned components are part of the evaporative emissions system found on 1996 and newer vehicles. Fuel tank vapors are collected, stored in a charcoal filled canister, and purged (consumed by the engine). In order for successful purging of the stored vapors, a vent allows fresh air to enter the canister, allowing a flushing action. The vent valve closes when the system routinely checks for leakage and purge flow. Your truck appears to have a restriction in the vent plumbing.

Brad Bergholdt is an automotive technology instructor at Evergreen Valley College in San Jose, Calif. Readers may send him email at under-the-hood(at)earthlink.net; he cannot make personal replies.

Life & Style

Gaga, Missy Elliott in tears after getting Billboard honors

NEW YORK (AP)—Lady Gaga and Missy Elliott were in tears Friday as they discussed the struggles they faced in their careers at an event honoring women in the music industry.

Gaga was named Billboard's woman of the year, while Elliott—who has largely stayed out of the spotlight in recent years, save for a surprise Super Bowl appearance, but returned last month with a new single—was dubbed innovator of the year.

Loretta Lynn, Demi Lovato, Selena Gomez, Brittany Howard of Alabama Shakes, Lana Del Rey, girl group Fifth Harmony, pop singer Tori Kelly and country singer Kelsea Ballerini were also honored at the event, along with 50 female music executives.

The Billboard Women In Music event, which included guests like Alicia Keys, Paul Rudd, Martina McBride and Jussie Smollett from "Empire," will air Dec. 18 on Lifetime.

AP

Billboard "Woman of the Year" honoree Lady Gaga poses with singer Tony Bennett at the 2015 Billboard Women in Music honors at Cipriani 42nd Street on Friday, Dec. 11, 2015, in New York.

TEARS OF JOY

Gaga—who earned a Grammy nomination Monday and a Golden Globe nod on Thursday—grew emotional onstage when she spoke about her struggles to find her voice in the industry.

"It's really hard sometimes for women in music. It's like a (expletive) boys club we can't get into. Sorry grandma," she said. "I've tried for so long. I just wanted to be taken seriously as a musician."

Gaga was introduced to the stage by her mother, Cynthia Germanotta, who said piano lessons as a child helped the pop star discover her gift for music. The singer ended her speech with strong words for those who doubted her in the past: "But I can write songs and I can sing."

Elliott, too, was emotional in a 6-minute speech that earned a standing ovation louder than any other Friday afternoon. The rapper, who recently returned with the single "WTF (Where They From)" after years away from the spotlight, cried throughout her speech.

"I was that kid that used to write on my mother's walls ... I just had songs written all over the walls ... (and) as time went on I realized I was different and unique and not a follower," she said. "I've had my ups and downs, there's times I've wanted to give up, but God had another plan for me and if it had not been for him, I would not be standing here."

She went on to thank Janet Jackson for being a dependable friend and also paid tribute to her late friend, R&B singer Aaliyah.

"And Aaliyah I hope you're looking down and proud of me," she said.

AND THE NOMINEES ARE ...

Billboard's event also gave the leading ladies a chance to celebrate their Grammy nominations, which were announced Monday.

And while Gaga earned a Grammy nod for best song written for visual media for "Til It Happens To You"—from the sexual assault documentary "The Hunting Ground"—she was also rejoicing because of her Golden Globe nomination for acting.

"It feels great because I really care about my work as an actress and I spend a lot of time on it and you never know if people can see that or if they just think, 'You're a musician who wants to do everything,' and that's not me at all," said Gaga, whose role on FX's "American Horror Story: Hotel" earned her a nomination for best actress in a miniseries or motion picture made for television. "I love acting and I put so much of myself into it when I'm working, so to be recognized is so amazing."

Alabama Shakes earned four Grammy nominations, including album of the year and best alternative music album for "Sound & Color" as well as best rock performance and rock song for "Don't Wanna Fight."

"I hope I can be like Adele," band leader Howard said, holding her arms like Adele did when she won six Grammys in 2012. "Cradle all my babies."

Kelly, who released her debut album this year, is competing for best new artist.

"It's honestly the craziest thing to me. This is by far the craziest year of my life," she said.

SISTERS WITH VOICES

Lovato, who earned Billboard's rulebreaker award, hit a high note so perfectly that the audience applauded loudly before she could even finish her song.

The singer sang the tune "Stone Cold" with emotion and passion that filled the entire room—much like her peers.

Kelly was on guitar as she belted "Hollow" in strong form, and Howard was top notch when she sang "Joe." And Gaga closed the event with a performance of "Til It Happens to You" on piano.

Fifth Harmony was in sync as they performed a stripped down version of their hit "Worth It." It was followed by a cover of Destiny's Child's "Independent Woman"—fitting for Friday's event.

Lawrence Kasdan on the past, present and future of Han Solo

LOS ANGELES (AP)—Lawrence Kasdan isn't afraid to play favorites. For him, Han Solo is it.

He didn't create the scruffy-looking smuggler. He hadn't even heard the lore that George Lucas partially based Han on Francis Ford Coppola. But it was Kasdan who helped fully realize "Star Wars'" favorite scoundrel when he stepped in to write "The Empire Strikes Back" and "Return of the Jedi."

"He's reckless, he's feckless," Kasdan said in a recent interview. "He's cynical. He's tough. He's pragmatic. He's not that smart. I like that. He's the most fun."

In fact, it was the character of Han that made him consider coming back to the world of "Star Wars" in the first place. When Kathleen Kennedy called him up in 2012 to tell him that she was taking over Lucasfilm and that they were planning to make more "Star Wars" films, Kasdan took the meeting of course, but wasn't certain he wanted to rejoin the franchise.

Yet for Kasdan, 66, a four-time Oscar nominee who wrote "Raiders of the Lost Ark," and wrote and directed "The Big Chill," ''The Accidental Tourist" and "Grand Canyon," the shadow of "Star Wars" loomed large.

"It's always been playing in the background of my life. The movies were so big," he said. "They never go away. "

Kasdan

At Skywalker Ranch, Kennedy, Kasdan and George Lucas talked about plans for a new trilogy and a number of spin-offs, including one about a young Han Solo.

"I said, 'Oh, that's interesting,'" Kasdan recalled. So he signed on to write the young Han anthology movie with his 36-year-old son, Jon Kasdan, and agreed to consult on "The Force Awakens," which Michael Arndt ("Toy Story 3") was writing.

Kasdan had been consulting for nine months on "The Force Awakens"—coming in once or twice a week while also writing the Han movie—when they asked him to take over the script with director J.J. Abrams.

"There were issues that were coming up and there was enormous pressure to get the thing done, recalled Kasdan. "People were being hired. Stages were being rented...when everyone decided that J.J. and I would write the script, there was no big adjustment. We were already really getting along. Then, we just started again."

While the specifics of what exactly "The Force Awakens," out Friday, is about are being treated like state secrets, fans have been able to glean a few things from the trailers and promos. In the over 30 years since the events of "Return of the Jedi" Han Solo, for one, has changed his tune about the force, which he once dismissed as a hokey religion.

"(Hans is) older and wiser. But wiser is only worth so much," Kasdan teased. "We don't get any smarter. What we call wisdom is really just the accumulation of experiences. But when you do have a lot of experience, it gives you perspective. You think about your life in terms of, do you want to continue to do the things you've always done or do you want to break it up somehow? ... Are you stuck now or is there still a possibility of change? And I think those are the issues, not just for Han, but for everybody."

If that sounds like a lot of philosophizing and soul-searching, don't worry, Kasdan promises Han is still funny, too.

"Harrison is sort of beyond belief in this movie," Kasdan said. "He's absolute gold. It's like Spencer Tracy."

Ford's legacy and iconic embodiment of Han is why Kasdan understands keenly how difficult it will be to find an actor to play a young Han. Directors Phil Lord and Chris Miller ("21 Jump Street") have seen thousands of actors as they try to fill those twenty-something shoes.

Check out these 'Star Wars' fan films to feel the Force

LOS ANGELES (AP)—If the teasers, trailers and hints haven't sated your appetite for all things "Star Wars" in advance of the latest entry in the franchise, then it's time to tap into the force of fan films.

These sometimes hilarious, sometimes awe-inspiring and always off-canon creations are showcases for the creativity of "Star Wars" fanatics. You've got to give them credit for piecing together trailer hints into logical themes, pulling off low-budget special effects, and acting in generally cheesy fashion.

And fear not—the Disney empire won't be striking back. The company encourages these mash-ups, having revived the annual Star Wars Fan Film Awards in 2014 two years after buying Lucasfilm.

Here's a mini-marathon playlist to get you primed for Friday's release of "Star Wars: The Force Awakens":

1 A musical tribute to "Star Wars" fans set to Elton John's "Rocket Man." http://bit.ly/1PP5tFy

2 A low-budget remake of "The Force Awakens" trailer. http://bit.ly/1kTP8To

3 A special-effects laden duel, complete with Kylo Ren's wicked lightsaber crossguard. http://bit.ly/1N892Ac

4 The crew of the U.S. aircraft carrier Dwight D. Eisenhower remade the teaser trailer, complete with real-life fighter pilots. http://bit.ly/1MRNtVe

5 A clever stitching together of various teasers and trailers to date, including bits from international trailers and voice-overs from previous films. http://bit.ly/1NdffPN

6 A lightsaber fight that gets extra points for the choreography (note the behind the back parry) and alternate endings. http://bit.ly/1QIxSxc

7 Lightsaber boomerangs make this fan film scream "From Down Unda." http://bit.ly/1Xrp6CK

8 An officially sanctioned fan film that riffs on characters from the prequel trilogy and "The Clone Wars" animated series. http://bit.ly/1kTPGIZ

9 A Boba Fett spin-off teaser premised on his escape from the sarlacc that swallowed him in "Return of the Jedi." http://bit.ly/1Tf9B09

10 Yet another lightsaber battle—this time taken to deliberately ridiculous extremes. Watch for the Minecraft reference. http://bit.ly/1LA5O7o

Good will for Stewart gives him unique lobbying platform

NEW YORK (AP)—The nation's highest-profile congressional lobbyist snuck up behind Stephen Colbert on the CBS "Late Show," willing even to wear a Donald Trump wig to get his point across.

Thursday's appearance was the second time this week Jon Stewart returned to late-night television to push Congress to approve more funding to treat people sickened by working in the rubble of the World Trade Center following the Sept. 11 attacks.

AP

In this Sept. 16, 2015 file photo, comedian Jon Stewart stands with New York City first responders during a rally on Capitol Hill in Washington.

"If they don't pass this, I'll glue Congress together, dip them in gold and wear them around my friggin' neck," said Stewart, channeling Trump.

Stewart's access to Colbert's show and his former home at "The Daily Show" gave a unique advantage to supporters of the Zadroga Act, which became law in 2010 but has seen funding expire this fall. Earlier in the week, he went on "The Daily Show" with Trevor Noah, Stewart's first time back on the program since leaving as host during the summer.

Noah even got to express mock worry that Stewart had returned to reclaim his job. "I heard about this on American TV," he said, a reference to Jay Leno's return to the "Tonight" show after he'd briefly been replaced by Conan O'Brien and the ratings went down.

Stewart assured him he wasn't. He said he wanted to give attention to the issue "but I realized I didn't have a show."

Effectively, he did. Noah granted Stewart a segment that took more than half the program, and poignantly echoed a show Stewart had done when the legislation was first considered five years ago. Stewart tried to reconvene a panel of four first responders who appeared five years ago, but one had died and two were too sick to attend.

Colbert's career took off when he was a "Daily Show" correspondent. He got his own Comedy Central show that followed Stewart's each day before CBS tapped him to replace David Letterman.

The "Late Show" crowd gave Stewart a standing ovation when he walked up behind Colbert to talk about the Zadroga Act.

"It's a slam dunk," Colbert said. "Everyone wants that, right?"

"If I may, every human," Stewart replied.

Whether through Stewart's help or more traditional forms of lobbying—New York City police and firefighters joined New York senators Chuck Schumer and Kirsten Gillibrand at a news conference Thursday—there's reason for supporters to be optimistic. House Speaker Paul Ryan told Republicans on Thursday that the funding "is going to be taken care of."

Besides his late-night appearance, Stewart traveled to Washington to seek meetings with legislators who had not publicly come out in support of the funding.

"Nobody wants Jon Stewart banging on their office door anymore because he has such a platform," MSNBC's Luke Russert said, in reporting on the issue Friday.

Gillibrand seemed disappointed that Stewart's help was even necessary to push the funding through.

"It's sad that it takes a comedian to elevate the voices of our first responders and shine a light on this issue and it's even sadder that it's necessary," The New York Democrat said.

SHOWBIZ TIDBITS

With 'Force Awakens' looming, 'Heart of the Sea' sinks

NEW YORK (AP)—With "The Force Awakens" looming, "The Hunger Games: Mockingjay Part 2" notched its fourth-straight weekend atop the box office, while Ron Howard's whaling tale "In the Heart of the Sea" capsized. It was a quiet weekend at movie theaters. Few studios wanted to push out a new release days before "The Force Awakens." That left the final chapter of the "Hunger Games" saga to remain no. 1 with $11.3 million according to studio estimates Sunday. "In the Heart of the Sea," starring Chris Hemsworth, was the only major new release to test the pre-"Star Wars" waters. But its hopes sank with an estimated $11 million despite a production budget around $100 million. In limited release, Adam McKay's finance farce "The Big Short" opened strongly with $720,000 in eight theaters.

Swift to release concert tour exclusively on Apple Music

NEW YORK (AP)—Taylor Swift is releasing a live concert special from her star-studded "1989 World Tour" exclusively on Apple Music. The pop star announced Sunday, on her 26th birthday, that she will release the "The 1989 World Tour LIVE" on the streaming platform on Dec. 20. It will not be available for purchase, but it is free for streaming for Apple Music users. The concert features Swift's performance taped in Sydney, Australia. It will also include special appearances from Justin Timberlake, Mick Jagger, Kobe Bryant and others. Apple Music is currently the only platform streaming Swift's "1989." Swift, who wrote a critical Tumblr post in June about Apple's initial decision to not pay artists during its free trail launch of Apple Music, said Apple contacted her about capturing one of her concerts.

Simon & Schuster to publish crowdsourced Taylor Swift book

NEW YORK (AP)—Simon & Schuster will publish a crowdsourced book on Taylor Swift that fans will help create. The publisher announced Sunday that it will hold a contest where fans can name the book, which will be an oversized and illustrated volume "with the feel of a scrapbook." The book will collect magazine profiles and other various writings on Swift over her 10-year career. Simon & Schuster is looking for "one super-Swiftie" to serve as "honorary author" whose name will appear on the jacket. Passionate fans can upload a video of three minutes or less to make their cases. The winner will be paid $10,000. A third contest will also be held to design the cover. Senior Editor Jofie Ferrari-Adler said he hopes "Swifties around the world" will get involved.

Publisher seeks to drop suit against J.D. Salinger's family

CONCORD, N.H. (AP)—A publisher that sued J.D. Salinger's widow and son, saying they interfered with efforts to sell three stories written by "The Catcher in the Rye" author, said Friday that it wants to drop the lawsuit.

Tennessee-based Devault-Graves Agency LLC, which specializes in reprinting old works, published the short stories in the United States last year in an e-book and in paperback. Written in the 1940s, they first appeared in magazines. Copyright protections had expired for "The Young Folks," ''Go See Eddie," and "Once A Week Won't Kill You."

When Devault-Graves sought to publish them internationally, Colleen and Matthew Salinger objected, saying that would violate foreign copyright laws. Devault-Graves sued in March, accusing the Salingers of hindering its business relationships with foreign literary agents and publishers, some of whom ended their contracts with Devault-Graves.

Devault-Graves said the stories are in the public domain. It sought a ruling affirming that it is entitled to publish the stories in up to 168 countries that have signed an international copyright agreement.

The Salingers wanted the case dismissed, saying a judge would have to evaluate a series of complicated questions of international copyright law on a country-by-country basis. Their lawyers noted a court in Germany stopped an effort to publish a German translation of the stories, saying they still had copyright protection.

Friday's dismissal notice, subject to a judge's review, was filed in federal court in Concord, New Hampshire. Lawyers for Memphis-based Devault-Graves and the Salingers didn't immediately return messages seeking comment.

Salinger died in 2010 at age 91 in Cornish, New Hampshire.

Wife's retirement jitters need adjustment therapy

DEAR ABBY: I'm writing about the letter you printed from "Excited in Maryland" (Aug. 16), whose wife makes snide comments about his impending retirement. That milestone is the biggest, scariest life change people make—a time marker like no other.

With many people, our identity is tied to our careers. In my case, I enjoyed a long, successful career as a social worker, counselor, teacher and mother. I wasn't the primary breadwinner and was able to work less than full time. When I retired seven years ago, my day was my own, with little accountability to my husband. I had quiet when I wanted it, music of my own choosing, ate when and what I wanted—and complete privacy all day, every day.

My husband, one of the nicest men I've ever known, retired two years ago, and I still haven't come to terms with the fact that he's home all the time. He doesn't ask me to do anything differently, but he's HERE, which means my definition of privacy has changed. I realize how lucky I am to have him, our long marriage, our health, our kids and financial stability. I just need a predictable block of time I can depend on to have the house all to myself.

That letter writer's wife may be worried about the huge change that is coming. My husband has enough interests, hobbies and projects that he's always busy, but we are different people. He can get lost in his project while I'm "on alert" for any interruption, real or imagined.

A couple of my friends have decided to postpone retirement because they don't want to be home all day with their husbands. They are both mental health therapists, but they can't talk with their husbands about it. If THEY can't, then who can? This seems to be the most major life challenge yet, but I can't find anyone who's willing to discuss it. Is there anyone out there to honestly help us negotiate this phase?

LIZ IN IOWA

DEAR LIZ: Because of the complicated nature of their work, many therapists have therapists of their own. That is what I would have recommended, if either of the couples you mentioned in your letter had asked, to improve their level of communication.

As for the rest of us "regular" folks, a licensed family therapist would be qualified to help. I agree that retirement requires an adjustment on the part of both spouses. You should look for a counselor who is older and who can empathize with what you and your husband are experiencing.

DEAR ABBY: My father-in-law picks his nose. I had a birthday dinner for my wife with 15 people around the restaurant table, when her father inserted his forefinger into his nostril and started digging. Sometimes he digs for up to 10 minutes. My wife says, "Don't look." What would Abby do?

JOHN IN FORT WORTH, TEXAS

DEAR JOHN: Abby would use the first chance she got to speak to the man alone and tell him that picking his nose in public grosses people out. Then she'd suggest the next time he feels the urge, he should leave the table, head for a restroom and take care of it in private.

Good advice for everyone – teens to seniors – is in "The Anger in All of Us and How to Deal With It." To order, send your name and mailing address, plus check or money order for $7 (U.S. funds) to: Dear Abby, Anger Booklet, P.O. Box 447, Mount Morris, IL 61054-0447. (Shipping and handling are included in the price.)

DEAR ABBY

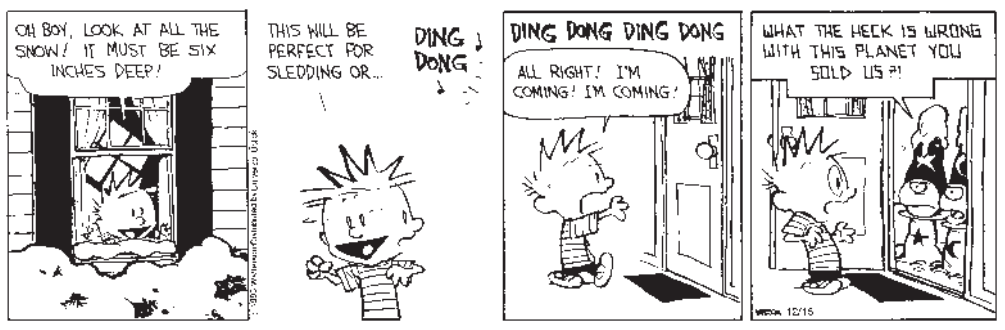
By ABIGAIL VAN BUREN
UNIVERSAL PRESS SYNDICATE

Dear Abby is written by Abigail Van Buren, also known as Jeanne Phillips, and was founded by her mother, Pauline Phillips. Contact Dear Abby at www.DearAbby.com or P.O. Box 69440, Los Angeles, CA 90069.

Pastimes

Calvin and Hobbes

By Bill Waterson

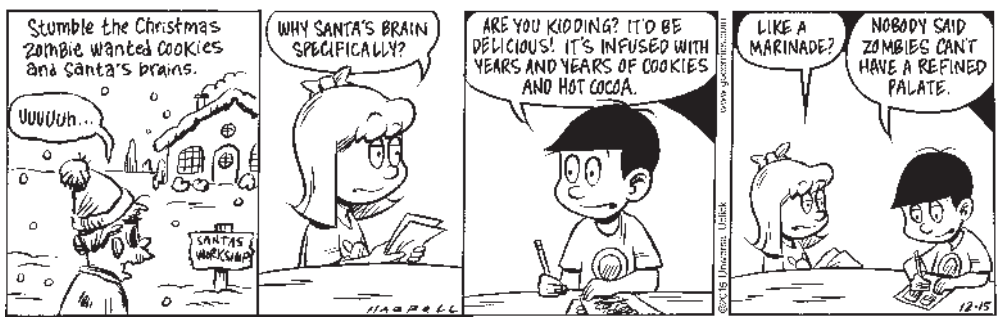

OH BOY, LOOK AT ALL THE SNOW! IT MUST BE SIX INCHES DEEP!
THIS WILL BE PERFECT FOR SLEDDING OR...
DING DONG
DING DONG DING DONG
ALL RIGHT! I'M COMING! I'M COMING!
WHAT THE HECK IS WRONG WITH THIS PLANET YOU SOLD US?!

Garfield®

By Jim Davis

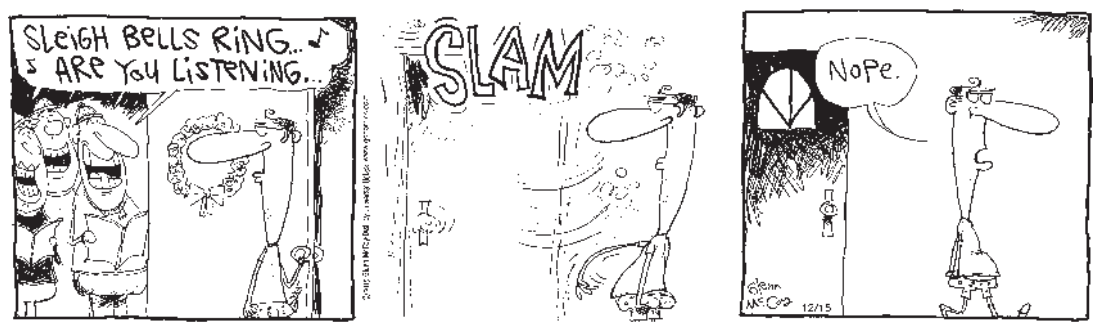
Adam@home

By Bryan Basset


Stumble the Christmas Zombie wanted cookies and Santa's brains.
UUUUuh...
SANTA'S WORKSHOP
WHY SANTA'S BRAIN SPECIFICALLY?
ARE YOU KIDDING? IT'D BE DELICIOUS! IT'S INFUSED WITH YEARS AND YEARS OF COOKIES AND HOT COCOA.
LIKE A MARINADE?
NOBODY SAID ZOMBIES CAN'T HAVE A REFINED PALATE.

The Duplex

By Glenn McCoy



CROSSWORD

By Eugene Sheffer

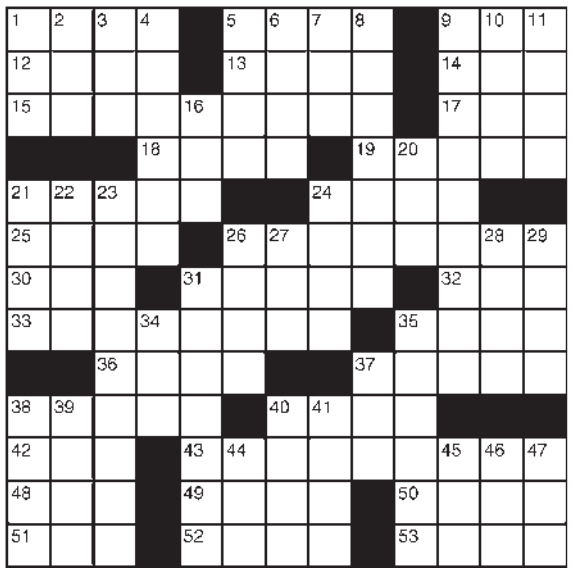
ACROSS
1 Honey drink
5 "I'm beat!"
9 Report card stat
12 Poet Teasdale
13 Part in a play
14 Ice-T's music
15 L'Orange-flavored French vodka
17 Seer's gift
18 Hirsch of "Taxi"
19 Losing battles?
21 "— the Beat" (Go-Go's hit)
24 Drench
25 Prized horse
26 "Feed me!"
30 Pres. after LBJ
31 Moon's path
32 Pedometer reset
33 Houdini, for one
35 Minn. neighbor
36 Obtains
37 Bungle
38 Oft-quoted Yogi
40 Appear
42 Pub pint
43 "Jeepers!"
48 NNW's opposite
49 Port of Algeria
50 "Garfield" dog
51 "Jazz" filmmaker Burns
52 Calif. wine region
53 River blockers

DOWN
1 NYC sports venue
2 Stud site
3 "Who — you?"
4 Nine-to-five gig
5 Goad
6 Gangster
7 Golfer Ernie
8 Remove unwanted elements
9 Apollo and Eros
10 Yesteryear
11 iPad extras
16 Big belly
20 Novelist Fleming
21 Not so hot?
22 Wry Bombeck
23 Nickname of the N.Y. Jets
24 Leg bone
26 Pupil setting
27 Wharton grad
28 Byway
29 Musician Ono
31 Stop sign's shape
34 Suffix with cash
35 Biblical hunter
37 Tilly or Ryan
38 Revel (in)
39 Otherwise
40 Shower bar?
41 "Hairspray" mom
44 Mouths (Lat.)
45 Toothcare org.
46 Pep
47 "Indeed!"

Solution time: 22 mins.

E	L	S	E	■	B	U	M	■	M	I	⌐	D
K	A	W	A	S	A	K	I	■	A	C	A	I
G	I	F	T	C	A	R	D	■	D	O	I	N
■	■	■	F	O	S	■	R	W	A	N	D	A
S	H	O	R	T	■	L	I	A	M	■	■	■
R	E	M	Y	■	F	I	F	I	E	E	N	■
A	N	N	■	G	R	A	F	T	■	P	I	S
■	S	I	⌐	T	E	R	S	■	S	I	G	H
■	■	■	H	O	C	S	■	I	I	C	H	Y
O	N	T	A	S	K	■	P	O	O	■	■	■
D	O	O	M	■	L	I	F	T	O	F	F	S
I	N	H	E	■	E	S	C	A	P	E	E	S
N	E	T	S	■	S	O	S	■	S	U	Z	E

Yesterday's answer 12-15



STUMPED? For answers to today's crossword, call **1-900-226-5955**! 99¢ per minute, touch-tone/rotary phones. (18+ only.) A King Features service, NYC.

CELEBRITIES BORN ON THIS DAY: Adam Brody, 36; Julie Taymor, 63; Don Johnson, 66; Tim Conway, 82.

Happy Birthday: Make a serious attempt to stabilize your course. Greater security should be your goal, along with bringing about the change required to encourage others to have confidence in you and your abilities. A simple but effective approach to life will be better than taking on too much or trying to make a big splash. Don't let your emotions or personal matters get in your way. Your numbers are 7, 13, 19, 22, 29, 36, 43.

ARIES (*March 21-April 19*): Take charge of your life. It's up to you to make things happen. Ask for favors or help from someone who shares your enthusiasm and determination. Don't participate in arguments that solve nothing and waste your time. ✪✪✪✪

TAURUS (*April 20-May 20*): Put your best foot forward and tuck your emotions away where they won't distract you. You want to have clear vision when it comes to achieving your goals. Set up meetings and discuss what's required in order to make your dreams come true. ✪✪

GEMINI (*May 21-June 20*): Tidy up personal business and look out for your emotional well-being. Pay more attention to your long-lost dreams. Don't let others stand in your way, and make plans for the future that will bring you personal and professional gains. ✪✪✪✪✪

CANCER (*June 21-July 22*): An unusual encounter will get you thinking about travel and learning possibilities in the new year. Check out courses or places that excite you and discuss your plans with someone you love. Romance is in the stars. ✪✪✪

LEO (*July 23-Aug. 22*): You can bring about change if you are proactive and passionate about what you want to do. Explain your reasoning to someone who will be affected by your decision. It's best to get any doubts out of the way before you proceed. ✪✪✪

VIRGO (*Aug. 23-Sept. 22*): Making changes at home will be difficult, but in the end will bring you great pleasure. As long as you don't go over budget, you will be satisfied with the results and the praise you receive for a job well done. Romance is encouraged. ✪✪✪

LIBRA (*Sept. 23-Oct. 22*): Take on whatever you want when it comes to projects outside your home, but when it comes to domestic matters, do your best to take care of your responsibilities so that you can enjoy activities and events. ✪✪✪✪

SCORPIO (*Oct. 23-Nov. 21*): Don't judge others if you don't want to be judged. Focus on what you can do to make your neighborhood, community or home environment peaceful and efficient. Self-improvement projects should begin with research. Short trips will provide valuable information. ✪✪

SAGITTARIUS (*Nov. 22-Dec. 21*): Too much of anything will lead to disaster. Do your best to take care of unfinished business. Dealing with people who are waiting for you to make a decision will ease your stress and allow you to follow your heart. ✪✪✪✪

EUGENIA LAST

THE LAST WORD IN ASTROLOGY

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CAPRICORN (*Dec. 22-Jan. 19*): Put money matters in perspective. If someone gets upset because you don't want to cough up cash for luxury items you don't need, reconsider whether this person loves you for who you are or for what you can provide. ✪✪✪

AQUARIUS (*Jan. 20-Feb. 18*): Someone you respect will give you a reason to rethink your future plans. Considering what you have done in the past, where you are now and where you want to be will help you realize your potential and lead to victory. ✪✪✪

PISCES (*Feb. 19-March 20*): You'll have some fabulous ideas, but before you put them into play, make sure they are affordable. Pay as you go should be your course of action in order to avoid a heavy debt that could lead to restrictions. ✪✪✪

Birthday Baby: You are sensitive, caring and helpful. You are a crusader and a leader.

*Eugenia's website—**eugenialast.com**, Eugenia's android app @ **http://bit.ly/exhoro** and join Eugenia on **twitter/facebook/linkedin**.*

SUDOKU

Conceptis Sudoku *By Dave Green*

		6				5		
	7			6			3	
9			2		7			6
		3	6		4	8		
	2						1	
		7	1		8	9		
1			9		3			8
	8			4			6	
		2				3		

Difficulty Level ★★ 12/15

Sudoku is a number-placing puzzle based on a 9x9 grid with several given numbers. The object is to place the numbers 1 to 9 in the empty squares so that each row, each column and each 3x3 box contains the same number only once. The difficulty level of the Conceptis Sudoku increases from Monday to Saturday.

Friday's SUDOKU Answer

6	2	9	4	3	8	1	5	7
8	5	3	7	6	1	4	9	2
1	7	4	9	2	5	3	6	8
4	8	2	1	7	9	5	3	6
7	9	5	3	8	6	2	1	4
3	1	6	5	4	2	7	8	9
9	6	1	2	5	7	8	4	3
5	3	7	8	9	4	6	2	1
2	4	8	6	1	3	9	7	5

Difficulty Level ★ 12/11

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WONDERWORD®

By DAVID OUELLET

HOW TO PLAY: All the words listed below appear in the puzzle — horizontally, vertically, diagonally and even backward. Find them, circle each letter of the word and strike it off the list. The leftover letters spell the **WONDERWORD.**

SOUTH BEACH, FLORIDA **Solution: 7 letters**

B	D	V	A	T	L	A	N	T	I	C	C	I	H	C
A	A	I	N	L	O	C	N	I	L	I	M	A	I	M
R	N	B	L	G	A	L	L	E	R	I	E	S	G	Y
R	C	E	E	I	S	E	U	Q	I	T	U	O	B	O
I	I	L	T	N	D	O	O	F	P	M	L	G	A	U
E	N	L	P	N	Y	O	P	Ⓨ	E	F	E	N	R	T
R	G	E	U	A	I	A	I	S	Ⓐ	N	D	I	S	H
C	E	I	R	M	R	O	C	S	R	Ⓑ	P	M	C	F
U	O	S	K	K	M	T	P	S	L	S	T	A	R	U
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Wade leads rally, Heat beat Grizzlies, 100-97

MIAMI (AP)—Down by 16 at one point, trailing for the entire second half and staring squarely at what would have been a four-game losing streak, the Miami Heat were in serious trouble.

That is, until Dwyane Wade got a fortunate bounce that the Heat desperately needed.

Wade's jumper with 21.9 seconds left hit the front of the rim before falling to give Miami its only lead of the second half, and the Heat ended the game on an 11-0 run to rally past the Memphis Grizzlies 100-97 on Sunday night.

"Dwyane's uncanny," Heat coach Erik Spoelstra said. "He can play absolutely horrible stretches of basketball and have the quickest memory, and all of a sudden get to the last 2 minutes and he has incredible confidence. ... Sometimes when you don't know where to go, that's always a great option, having a Hall of Famer."

Chris Bosh led the Heat with 22 points, Gerald Green added 16—three of them on free throws after Memphis' Matt Barnes fouled him behind the arc with 1:32 left—and Luol Deng scored 15 for Miami. The Heat trailed 75-59 late in the third quarter before coming back.

Wade got Miami within one on a drive with a minute left, then got the night's biggest shot to fall one possession later.

"I knew the ball's going to be in my hands ... and I was able to get a couple things to go," said Wade, who scored 14 for Miami.

After the game, he wrapped Grizzlies guard Mario Chalmers—the former Miami starter who made his return to the arena that he called home for his first seven full NBA seasons—in an embrace they both enjoyed.

AP
Miami Heat guard Dwyane Wade (3) goes up to shoot against Memphis Grizzlies center Marc Gasol (33) during final seconds of the second half of an NBA basketball game, Sunday, Dec. 13, 2015, in Miami.

Chalmers wasn't surprised at Wade's heroics.

"I'm used to seeing things like that," Chalmers said.

Jeff Green scored a season-high 26 points for Memphis, while surprise starter Barnes finished with 13 points and 13 rebounds.

Chalmers, playing against Miami as an opponent for the first time since being traded to Memphis last month, finished with 12 points for the Grizzlies—including a three-point play midway through the fourth to put his team up 89-79.

"We had a great chance to win," Memphis coach Dave Joerger said. "We had all kinds of open shots but we didn't make them. We needed to make one shot in the final two and a half minutes. We didn't. They needed to score in about six straight possessions, and they did."

The Grizzlies changed their lineup shortly before game time, ruling Tony Allen—who was originally listed as a starter—out with a right knee injury and inserting Barnes into the starting five to replace Zach Randolph. It was the first time Randolph played as a reserve since March 23, 2013.

Randolph and Marc Gasol each had 12 points for Memphis.

Thunder 104, Jazz 98, OT

In Oklahoma City, Kevin Durant scored 31 points—all but two after halftime—and Oklahoma City rallied from a 16-point deficit for a second win over Utah in a three-day span.

Russell Westbrook added 25 points, 11 rebounds and five assists for the Thunder, who have won nine straight home games against Utah dating to the 2010-11 season. Oklahoma City extended its longest winning streak of the season to five games.

Rodney Hood had 23 points, Gordon Hayward scored 22 and Alec Burks added 21 for the Jazz, who fell five games behind first-place Oklahoma City in the Northwest Division.

Westbrook scored two baskets in the first 36 seconds of overtime to give the Thunder the lead, and Utah missed its first nine field-goal attempts in the extra period. The Jazz avoided an OT shutout on Hayward's basket with 8.6 seconds left.

Raptors 96, 76ers 76

In Toronto, DeMar DeRozan had 25 points, Luis Scola added 22 and Toronto beat Philadelphia for its fourth straight win.

DeRozan came into the night averaging 21.7 points per game, and this was his third straight outing with at least 20 points. Scola matched his season-high point total from a game in November.

Toronto started slowly, trailing 16-8 at the midpoint of the first quarter. But the Raptors then took charge to hand the 76ers their sixth straight loss.

Jahlil Okafor led Philadelphia with 23 points and 14 rebounds while Robert Covington added 15 points and nine rebounds.

Suns 108, Timberwolves 101

In Phoenix, Brandon Knight rebounded from a one-point outing in his last game to make seven 3-pointers and score 25 points, helping Phoenix beat Minnesota.

Knight scored nine of his points in the fourth quarter, all on 3s.

The Timberwolves committed 24 turnovers, including nine in the third quarter, which helped the Suns get out in transition and take control of the game for good. Phoenix scored 43 points off turnovers for the game.

Zach LaVine led the Wolves with 28 points and Kevin Martin added 19.

The Suns didn't score for more than 4 minutes during the fourth quarter as Minnesota cut into a 19-point lead, but P.J. Tucker's 3-pointer at the 7:54 mark followed by Eric Bledsoe's steal and dunk gave Phoenix a 90-75 lead.

With streak over, regular season begins for Warriors

MILWAUKEE (AP)—Every victory raised the stakes for the Golden State Warriors.

Now that their record winning streak is over, the defending NBA champions can return to a bit of normalcy.

"I just told the guys that now we can have a regular season," forward Draymond Green said in recounting his talk to teammates in the locker room after the loss Saturday night to the Milwaukee Bucks.

Golden State's NBA-record start ended after 24 games with the 108-95 loss to Milwaukee. The Warriors had a 28-game regular-season winning streak going back to last spring, five short of the NBA record 33-game run by the Los Angeles Lakers in 1971-72.

Attention on the Warriors and their likable cast of characters, led by MVP sharpshooter Stephen Curry, grew as the victories piled up. On the road, fans and media filled arenas wondering if this was the night they would witness the end of the run.

That arrived on the final stop of a seven-game road trip Saturday, less than 24 hours after Golden State needed two overtimes to beat the Celtics in Boston. They were outplayed by the Bucks.

"We looked like we ran out of gas a little bit," Warriors interim coach Luke Walton said.

His team, which normally makes 13 3s a game, was 6 of 26 from behind the arc.

Most Warriors said they didn't feel any added pressure during the run. But it did seem as though Golden State was playing in the NBA Finals every time it hit the floor.

"It has been kind of a playoff feel just with the streak and all the media and attention around," Green said. "I think probably the last seven or eight games we stopped getting better and just tried to win the game."

Guard Shaun Livingston said the streak made the Warriors' season different.

"It has been mentally taxing, just every game. We're competitors, so we're not complaining about it. It is fun to play that way," Livingston said. "I think now we can settle in more to the season."

The Warriors' defense was starting to slip, Walton said. Turnovers were becoming more an issue.

Golden State can return to practice to work on the little things without the specter of the streak hanging over the team.

"What we are trying to do is be an NBA championship team. That requires a lot of work in getting back to the fundamentals and basics of game," Walton said.

This is far from a team in freefall, though.

AP
Golden State Warriors' Stephen Curry looks up from the bench during a time-out during the second half of an NBA basketball game against the Milwaukee Bucks, Saturday, Dec. 12, 2015, in Milwaukee.

At 24-1 going into the next game Wednesday at home against Phoenix, the Warriors will still draw attention if they approach another milestone—the Chicago Bulls' 72-10 record in 1995-96 is the best record in NBA history.

Confidence won't be a problem with Golden State.

"We missed shots. They didn't shut us down, man," guard Klay Thompson said after the loss. "No one shuts us down."

Panthers pound Falcons 38-0, clinch 1st-round bye

CHARLOTTE, North Carolina (AP)—Cam Newton added to his MVP resume, completing 15 of 21 passes for 265 yards and three touchdowns, and the unbeaten Carolina Panthers defeated the Atlanta Falcons 38-0 on Sunday to clinch a first-round bye in the NFC playoffs.

Newton connected on scoring strikes of 74 and 46 yards to Ted Ginn Jr., and Jonathan Stewart ran for a touchdown as the Panthers (13-0) scored on their first three possessions.

Newton also threw a 4-yard TD pass to Ed Dickson in the final seconds of the first half before leaving for good at the end of the third quarter with Carolina up 38. He finished with a career-high quarterback rating of 153.3, and the Panthers won their 17th straight regular-season game.

Carolina's defense forced four turnovers and had five sacks, while limiting struggling Falcons quarterback Matt Ryan to 224 yards passing. Atlanta is 6-7 and has dropped six in a row.

AP
Carolina Panthers' Cam Newton (1) celebrates with fans after an NFL football game against the Atlanta Falcons in Charlotte, N.C., Sunday, Dec. 13, 2015.

Patriots 27, Texans 6

In Houston, Tom Brady threw for 226 yards and two touchdowns and the New England Patriots snapped a two-game skid to clinch a playoff spot.

Brady threw TD passes to Keshawn Martin and Rob Gronkowski in the first half to help New England build a 17-6 lead.

The Patriots (11-2) didn't move the ball as well in the second half, but the defense harassed Brian Hoyer into multiple mistakes. Jabaal Sheard had strip sacks on Hoyer twice after halftime. The Patriots recovered the second one early in the fourth, and James White made it 27-6 with a 2-yard run three plays later.

Hoyer was sacked five times and left the game to be evaluated for a concussion with about 9 minutes remaining for the Texans (6-7). The quarterback already missed a game this season after getting a concussion on Nov. 16.

Steelers 33, Bengals 20

In Cincinnati, Andy Dalton broke his right thumb while making a tackle on an interception, and the Steelers roughed up backup AJ McCarron while pulling away to a victory that left the AFC North up for grabs.

The Steelers (8-5) rumbled with the Bengals during pregame warmups and then led the whole way, sending Cincinnati (10-3) to its first lopsided loss of the season.

William Gay returned one of McCarron's passes 23 yards for a touchdown, and Ben Roethlisberger had another good day as Pittsburgh's resurgent offense kept rolling. Pittsburgh has scored 30 points in five straight games, a franchise record.

The game—and potentially Cincinnati's season—turned on one interception. Stephon Truitt picked off Dalton's shovel pass in the first quarter, and the quarterback broke his right thumb while making the tackle. It's unclear how many weeks he'll miss.

Raiders 15, Broncos 12

In Denver, Khalil Mack had five sacks of Brock Osweiler, including one in the end zone for a safety, and Derek Carr bounced back from an awful first half.

Carr threw two touchdown passes and the Raiders (6-7) beat the Broncos for the first time since Sept. 12, 2011, despite being held to minus-12 yards in the first half—the worst performance by a team heading into halftime in nearly a quarter-century.

The Broncos (10-3) failed to hold onto a 12-0 halftime lead or several on-target throws from Osweiler, including two big drops by Demaryius Thomas, one for a touchdown and another for a late first down.

The one that really stung was a drop by a wide-open Vernon Davis at the Oakland 42 on fourth-and-5 from the Denver 37 with 3:45 left.

Denver's Brandon McManus, who nailed four field goals in the first half, clanked a 49-yarder that would have tied it off the left upright with 10:22 remaining, however. Sebastian Janikowski then missed a 43-yarder with 5:07 remaining, giving the Broncos good field position at their 33, but Davis had his big drop on fourth down after that.

Packers 28, Cowboys 7

In Green Bay, Wis., Eddie Lacy ran for 124 yards and a touchdown, while fellow running back James Starks added two scores.

The Packers (9-4) have a one-game lead in the NFC North over Minnesota after their second straight victory.

With 435 yards and 29 first downs, Green Bay got better production out of its inconsistent offense with coach Mike McCarthy assuming play-calling duties again.

The Packers were still hampered at times by penalties and problems in short-yardage situations.

But the defense and running game came up with big plays in the fourth quarter. Dallas' touchdown came on Robert Turbin's 7-yard run midway through the third quarter to make it 14-7.

The Cowboys (4-9) suffered a setback to their chances of winning the mediocre NFC East.

Seahawks 35, Ravens 6

In Baltimore, Russell Wilson threw five touchdown passes, three to Doug Baldwin, against the injury-depleted Ravens.

Wilson went 23 for 32 for 292 yards. The five TD throws matched a career high—set earlier this season against Pittsburgh—and gave him 16 over his last four games.

Baldwin scored on passes of 14, 22 and 16 yards. Tyler Lockett caught TD throws of 8 and 49 yards.

Seattle's second-ranked defense backed Wilson by keeping the Ravens (4-9) out of the end zone, forcing two turnovers and allowing only 28 yards rushing.

The Seahawks (8-5) have won six of seven to move into position for an NFC wild card.

Baltimore's offense sputtered under the direction of Jimmy Clausen, who completed 23 of 40 passes for a career-high 274 yards and an interception.

Eagles 23, Bills 20

In Philadelphia, Caleb Sturgis kicked a 30-yard field goal with 3:26 left, then Ed Reynolds intercepted Tyrod Taylor's pass in the final minutes.

LeSean McCoy had 74 yards rushing and 35 receiving in his return to Philadelphia. He kissed the Eagles logo at midfield before the coin toss, but ran off the field immediately after the game.

McCoy never approached Chip Kelly. He said last week he didn't want to shake Kelly's hand or talk to the man who traded him.

The Eagles (6-7) and Redskins (6-7) are tied atop the NFC East standings. The New York Giants (5-7) could make it a three-way tie with a win at Miami on Monday night.

The Bills (6-7) fell two games behind in the AFC wild-card race.

Taylor's streak of 222 passes without a pick ended when his deep pass went right to Reynolds with 1:16 remaining.

Redskins 24, Bears 21

In Chicago, Kirk Cousins threw for 300 yards and a touchdown and the Redskins hung on to beat the Bears after Chicago's Robbie Gould missed yet another late field goal.

Washington, which came in tied with Philadelphia and the Giants for the NFC East lead, went ahead early in the fourth quarter on Dustin Hopkins' 47-yard field goal. The Redskins (6-7) broke a nine-game road losing streak dating to last season.

The Bears (5-8) were in position to score after Jay Cutler hit Alshon Jeffery with a 50-yard pass that put the ball on the Washington 35. The usually reliable Gould, who missed the potential winner at the end of regulation in last week's overtime loss to San Francisco, got a chance to redeem himself.

His 50-yard attempt wasn't even close as it sailed wide right.

Jaguars 51, Colts 16

In Jacksonville, Fla., Blake Bortles threw for three touchdowns and ran for a score—all in the second half—and the Jaguars ended the Colts' 16-game winning streak in the AFC South.

The Jaguars (5-8) scored on offense, defense and special teams in the same game for the first time since 2011, the franchise's most complete game under third-year coach Gus Bradley.

It helped Jacksonville gain ground in the muddled division, at least on the Colts (6-7).

Indianapolis' division streak was the longest in NFL history. The Colts' previous loss against the AFC South came on Dec. 16, 2012, at Houston.

Chiefs 10, Chargers 3

In Kansas City, Mo., the Chiefs kept San Diego out of the end zone twice in the final seconds for their seventh consecutive win.

Alex Smith threw for 191 yards and a touchdown, along with his first interception after a franchise-record 312 attempts. But it was a banged-up defense that held San Diego without a touchdown for the second time this season that allowed the Chiefs (8-5) to escape.

The Chargers (3-10) took over at their 11 with 5 minutes left and quickly moved into Kansas City territory, converting fourth down three times. But after San Diego was called for delay of game at the Chiefs 1 with 5 seconds left, Philip Rivers threw incomplete into the end zone.

San Diego still had 2 seconds left, and an incomplete pass that would have ended the game was blown dead for a false start. With the ball pushed back to the 11-yard line, Rivers scrambled to his right and threw to the end zone, where his pass final pass fell incomplete.

The Chiefs spilled onto the field to celebrate another big win in their playoff chase.

Jets 30, Titans 8

In East Rutherford, N.J., Ryan Fitzpatrick threw three touchdown passes and New York's stingy defense stifled Marcus Mariota and the Titans' offense for most of the game.

Brandon Marshall, Eric Decker and Bilal Powell each caught TD passes for the Jets (8-5), who stayed on track in the AFC playoff race with their first three-game winning streak since 2011.

Fitzpatrick, who has set a single-season career high with 25 touchdown throws, finished 21 of 36 for 263 yards. Chris Ivory ran for 101 yards on 22 carries, and Randy Bullock kicked three field goals. Muhammad Wilkerson had three sacks.

The lone highlight for the lowly Titans (3-10) came in the third quarter when Antonio Andrews took a direct snap and connected with Mariota for a 41-yard touchdown — the rookie quarterback's first career reception.

Saints 24, Buccaneers 17

In Tampa, Fla., Drew Brees threw a pair of touchdown passes to Marques Colston and the Saints stopped a four-game losing streak,

Brees completed 31 of 41 passes for 312 yards without an interception. Colston scored on receptions of 1 and 3 yards in the first half, and Tim Hightower added a 3-yard TD run in the third quarter for the Saints (5-8).

The loss was the second in three games for the Bucs (6-7), whose hopes to make a run at a NFC wild card took a hit.

Jameis Winston threw a fourth-quarter TD pass to Adam Humphries to trim a 14-point deficit to 24-17. The Bucs got the ball back with just over five minutes remaining, punted four plays later and then watched New Orleans grind out three first downs to end the game.

Browns 24, 49ers 10

In Cleveland, Johnny Manziel shook off a first-half interception and sideline meltdown by throwing a touchdown pass in his first start since being benched for off-field antics.

The Browns snapped a seven-game losing streak.

Manziel passed for 270 yards, delivering a quality performance the Browns (3-10) desperately needed. He tossed a 2-yard TD pass to Gary Barnidge late in the third quarter as the Browns won for the first time since Oct. 11 and took some pressure off coach Mike Pettine.

Just before halftime, Manziel threw a pick and followed it with an angry outburst on the bench.

Isaiah Crowell rushed for 145 yards and had two short TD runs for Cleveland.

The 49ers (4-9) allowed nine sacks and managed just 127 yards on offense before a 94-yard drive in garbage time.

Rams 21, Lions 14

In St. Louis, Todd Gurley ran for 140 yards and two second-half touchdowns, and the Rams ended a five-game losing streak.

Trumaine Johnson's 58-yard interception return for St. Louis (5-8) was the only score in the first half, plus he did most of the work holding Calvin Johnson to a late 16-yard catch. Aaron Donald had three sacks of Matthew Stafford to further boost a defense that had sagged in recent weeks.

Golden Tate caught two touchdown passes for Detroit (4-9), which didn't have much to show for extra days off to regroup from a game-ending desperation TD pass by the Packers on Dec. 3.

Mendoza grabs last Fil-Taga Ace

By JON PEREZ
jon_perez@saipantribune.com
REPORTER

Lito Mendoza topped the year's final Fil-Taga Ace of the Month Tournament, winning the December title after Sunday's tournament at the Laolao Bay Golf & Resort.

Mendoza fired 40 and 39 at the front and back to finish with a 79 gross and with a 15 handicap gave him a net score of 64 for a three-shot win over Raffy Piamonte.

Mendoza now joins 16 other Fil-Taga Ace of the Month winners that will vie for the yearend title. Fil-Taga has yet to announce details of the yearend tournament—date, time, and venue.

Vic Roman and Randy Tudela (A and B, January); Jhun Ortiz and Raffy Piamonte (A and B, February); Ernie Lopez (March); Paul Bea (April); and Larry Pascual and Dandito Breboneria (A and B, May) are some of the FilTaga Ace of the Month winners.

CONTRIBUTED PHOTO
Lito Mendoza will be part of the Fil-Taga's yearend tournament, which will be announced at a later date.

William Retardo (June); Freddie Cataluna and Ruben Avendano (A and B, July); Greg Castro (August); Nestor Siruelo (September), Rene Batallones (October), and Eric Mandell and Norman Tenorio (A and B, November) also earned berths to the FilTaga Ace of the Year.

Piamonte finished with a 67 net after shooting a 47 and 48 for the 95 gross and with a 28 handicap earned him that final score.

Hak Chon Bae and Tony Cabrera had 69 each to end up tied for third to fourth places, while former associate judge Juan Lizama was fifth with a 73.

Gil Faller (74), Batallones (75), Adony Matutino and Bea (77 apiece), and Pascual (78) complete the Top 10 finishers.

Mike Cruz (79), Avendano (81), Retardo and Cataluna (82 apiece), and Mandell and Lopez (83 apiece) are the other Fil-Taga members who joined Sunday's tee-off.

Cataluna was the closest to the pin winner in one of the four par-3 holes doing it in hole No. 4. Faller, Bae, and Cataluna equaled the feat in No. 6, 11, and 15.

Important meetings for Saipan Little League

The Saipan Little League Board Inc. will be holding two important meetings this week to finalize plans that the group will be presenting to businesses interested in helping them in the upcoming 2016 season.

SLLBI president A.J. Palacios Murig said the first meeting is tomorrow, Dec. 16, 5:30pm at the conference room of the Gilbert C. Ada Gymnasium.

The board, Murig said, will discuss how they would present their plans to potential sponsors on how can they become partners of the CNMI's longest-running youth baseball program.

"The main agenda is the details for our sponsors, corporate or any type, on how they can help the SLLBI in general," Murig said in a text message.

The next meeting is on Friday, Dec. 18, also 5:30pm at the Ada Gym conference room where they would be inviting interested sponsors that would like to assist the youth program.

Friday's gathering will be a round table-type of meeting representatives of the business sector and other individuals who wanted to help the Saipan Little League program.

"It will be like a round table discussion between the board and all interested sponsors," added Murig.

The SLLBI is also in the process of finalizing schedules and other matters for the 2016 season, which the board is targeting to open by mid-January. ***(Jon Perez)***

Over 50 join first swim meet

More than 50 swimmers from host Saipan Swim Club and Tsunami Saipan participated in the SSC Double Distance Meet last Saturday at the Kan Pacific Swimming Pool.

The weekend event was the first meet of the delayed 2015-2016 season and the good turnout proved how the island's swimmers were excited to plunge into the pool again after a long break due to Typhoon Soudelor.

The season-opener event kicked off with the 400m freestyle race, which featured two teams from SSC. The first team was composed of the club's senior swimmers Kento Akimaru, Lennosuke Suzuki, Salofi Welch, and Christian Villacrusis. The second quartet had Jinnosuke Suzuki, Taiga Sato, David Boyer, and Caleb Wang.

Results of the relay along with the individual races have yet to be released at press time. Times in the weekend tournament will be considered in the CNMI record books.

After the 400m freestyle relay, organizers had the 200m freestyle relay, which was divided into two heats. Heat 1 had five teams with SSC fielding two squads and Tsunami Saipan entering three. Heat 2 was dominated by Tsunami Saipan as it had five teams, while SSC had only the foursome of Wataru Kadokura, Mark Chavez, Dino Sato, and Robert De Courteny.

Up next for the first meet of the season was the longest race of the event—the 800m freestyle—with only eight swimmers entered in the competition. Caleb Wang was among them and was joined on Heat 2 by Villacrusis, Akimaru, Taiga Sato, and Welch. Akimaru had the fastest seed time on Heat 2 with his 10:39.69, while Lennosuke Suzuki, Boyer, and R.J. Pierce raced on Heat 1.

There were also two heats in the 400m freestyle, while the 200m freestyle featured three heats and only SSC swimmers raced in both events, as Tsunami Saipan bets opted to participated in the last event of the day—the 100m freestyle. The final event had eight heats. ***(Roselyn B. Monroyo)***

WildBoyz close in on Thursday League leaders

By JON PEREZ
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REPORTER

The Jokers WildBoyz breezed past Jonny's Team SCS to stay within striking distance of the Top 2 teams in the Budweiser Open 8-Ball Thursday League held last week at Jokers Bar and Grill in Garapan.

The WildBoyz were a rude host to SCS, running away with an 11-2 decision behind the cue sticks of Patrick Cepeda, Ray Matsunaga, John Reyes, and Randy Sablan.

Bryan Fabre and Jerry Tiu scored the two wins for Team SCS as they fell behind by 1-5 early in the game.

The WildBoyz now has a 38-27 record, just one win away from fellow Jokers-backed squad Homeboyz's 39-26 slate and four away from the 42-23 of the league-leading National Alamo Car Rental.

The Wild Bill's Wild Wild West (28-37), Wild Bill's Rack 'N' Roll (25-40), and Team SCS (23-42) form the lower half of the standings.

Alamo also had an easy time against Rack 'N' Roll with a 10-3 triumph, while Homeboyz completed an 8-5 win over the Wild Wild West.

In the Tuesday League, the Jokers IT&E Voyagers and sister squad Destroyers remain 1-2 in the standings after last week's results against their respective opponents.

The Voyagers trounced the Docomo Hustlers, 8-5, for a league-best 47-31 mark, while the Destroyers are close behind at 46-32 following a 9-4 victory against the Jonny's Crazy 8 (32-46).

The loss dropped the Hustlers to 41-37 with the Jonny's Titans improving to 35-43 after a 9-4 win over the Jokers Straight-BlackBall (33-45).

Games today in the Tuesday League will have the Straight-BlackBall testing the Destroyers, the Voyagers facing the Titans, and the Hustlers going up against the Crazy 8.

In the Thursday League, the Triple W's take on the leaders Alamo, while Team SCS host the Rack 'N' Roll with the Homeboyz visiting the WildBoyz on Dec. 17 before matches take a break for two play dates on Dec. 24 and 31, Christmas and New Year's Eve.

CONTRIBUTED PHOTO
Leaders National Alamo Car Rental-Jokers players pose before facing off with the Wild Bill's Rack 'N' Roll in one of the three matches last week in the Budweiser Open 8-Ball Thursday League.

TAN

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my toenails, but I kept playing. I lost to Patricia, who is one of the best players in the tournament. Then in the afternoon, I came back to play and beat Tara in three sets. At that time my ankle hurt, but I continued to play because I really wanted to finish the game," Lee said in a message sent to *Saipan Tribune* yesterday.

"It was a great experience playing against a lot of good players," the Saipan Community School student said.

Meanwhile, Lee's fellow CNMI players, Conatsu Kaga and Ken Song, missed on their bid to enter the win column in their last game in the team tournament, while Robbie Schorr got the elusive victory in the doubles.

Schorr partnered with Tahiti's Jeremy Guines in slipping past Australian Capital Territory's Sam Bisa and Daniel Zhang, 5-4, 1-4, 10-4, in the boys U14 doubles. In the singles event, Song bowed to Bisa, 0-4, 0-4.

In the girls U12 division, Kaga lost to Subi Surenraj, 0-4, 1-4, of No. 2 seed NSW.

SANTOS

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ber, coming in second and third, respectively.

Angel San Nicolas settled for the silver in the men's 94kg division. He tipped the scales at 92.20kg where he lifted 95kg in the snatch and 125 kg in the clean and jerk for a 220kg total lift to earn a Sinclair score of 253.095.

Tudela finished third in the men's 85kg class with the best lift of 95kg (snatch) and 102kg (clean and jerk) for a 197kg total, and with an 81.20kg body weight giving him a 239.913 Sinclair score.

Salvi Villanueva, who finished runner-up to Johnson in the Trench Throwdown, was fourth in the men's 77kg. He had a body weight of 71.40kg with lifts of 87kg (snatch) and 118kg (clean and jerk) for a 202kg total lift and a 265.97 Sinclair score.

Bonnie Cruz was the other GetFit CNMI representative and placed third in the women's 69kg division.

The 2015 Micronesia Weightlifting Invitational was organized by the Guam Weightlifting Federation.

WSR

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last Dec. 7, 0-1, but the Knights are likely to join the Kingfishers in the semifinals with their 3-0-2 mark, two wins ahead of the third-running GTC (1-1-3). Garapan is at the bottom of the team standings with its 0-2-3 record.

In the Southern Group, Hopwood-1 and San Antonio occupy the Top 2 spots. The Hilitais have a 4-1-0 slate and took the lead in the pool after a 3-0 victory against San Antonio last Thursday. San Antonio dropped to a second-best 3-1-1 record, but is in a good position for the second semis berth, as third placer Koblerville has only two wins in five games.

The semis matches in both the girls and boys divisions will be played this Thursday, while the last elimination round games will take place today.

In the girls division, WSR will take on GTC at the latter's turf, while Garapan will host Oleai. Over in San Antonio, the Octopus will challenge Koblerville. The games at GTC and San Antonio will start at 4pm, while the Garapan match will behin at 4:30pm.

In the 5pm games in the boys division, WSR will duel GTC, while Koblerville will visit San Antonio. Over at the Navy Hill Field, the Mt. Carmel-Garapan pairing will start early at 4:30pm.

2015 FA Youth Challenge Cup Finals

PHOTOS By ROSELYN B. MONROYO

Tan Holdings FC U18 and Matansa FC U18 players pose for a photo after playing in the finals of the 2015 FA Youth Challenge Cup last Saturday at the Oleai Sports Complex Field.

Tan Holdings FC players and coach Jershwin Angeles, standing right, pose with their championship trophy.

NMIFA general secretary Ross Zapanta presents the championship trophy to Tan Holdings FC captain Joel Fruit.

Tan Holdings goalkeeper Joshua Galarion receives the Golden Glove award from NMIFA general secretary Ross Zapanta.

Matansa FC players and officials huddle during the halftime break.

Tan Holdings FC players watch the action at the pitch.

Tan Holdings FC's Anthony Fruit, left, and Matansa's Jether Yobech run after the ball.

Tan Holdings FC's Junsik Kim dribbles against two Matansa defenders.

Tan Holdings FC's Min Gyu Kim stops the ball using his knee.

Wade leads rally, Heat beat Grizzlies, 100-97

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Mendoza grabs last Fil-Taga Ace

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Tan, Lee win last game in Australia

By ROSELYN B. MONROYO
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REPORTER

The CNMI's Tania Tan and Carol Lee lifted Pacific Oceania to a 3-0 victory against Tasmania in the final ranking games in the 2015 12U & 14U Australian Teams Championships yesterday at the Melbourne Park.

Lee gave the Grand Slam Development Fund-backed girls U14 squad its first win after sweeping Charlotte Ingram, 4-0, 4-0. Lee then teamed up with Tan in the lone doubles match and the Commonwealth pair topped Lucy Jones and Chelsea Leggett, 4-1, 4-2. Earlier in the second singles match, Naia Guitton defeated Jones, 1-4, 1-4, to seal the early victory for Pacific Oceania, which avoided a last place finish with its shutout of Tasmania.

The singles win against Tasmania was Lee's third and second in a row in the team tournament and it came after she played for about five hours (just in the singles event) last Sunday. Her longest match lasted for two hours and 33 minutes and the CNMI bet managed to savor the sweet taste of victory against Tara Gilich of the No. 3 seed Western Australia, 4-6, 6-2, 10-7, in their afternoon game. Earlier in the morning, Lee challenged Patricia Apisah of eventual runner-up New South Wales in a nearly two-hour match with the latter escaping with a 6-4, 0-6, 10-5 win.

Last Saturday, Lee also competed in two three-set super tiebreak games and had a split, winning over Australian Capital Territory's Annerly Poulus first, 2-4, 5-3, 10-8, before falling short against Queensland's Megan Smith, 5-4 (5), 3-5, 7-10. Lee's two singles matches along with her teammates' other games lasted for more than six hours and the 13-year-old player endured them fighting off fatigue and knee and ankle injuries.

"For the last three days I played in four super tiebreakers. I was so tired and the tendon in my ankle is injured. I also hurt

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OCEANIA TENNIS
The CNMI's Tania Tan makes a backhand return during one of her games in the 2015 14/U Australian Championships last week at the Melbourne Park.

Santos wins gold in Guam tourney

By JON PEREZ
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REPORTER

Raymond Santos ruled the men's 62kg division as Team GetFit CNMI went home with four medals in the inaugural 2015 Micronesia Weightlifting Invitational held last Saturday at The Jungle inside the Father Duenas Memorial School in Mangilao.

Santos, weighing 61.20kg, had lifts of 100kg in the snatch and 120kg in the clean and jerk in the three attempts given to each lifter.

The 24-year-old, who won three silver medals in the same weight category in last year's Micronesian Games in Pohnpei, had a 220kg total lift.

Based on results given by Joey Tudela, who settled for bronze in the men's 85kg division, Santos failed in his attempt of lifting 110kg in the snatch and 130kg in the clean and jerk in his final tries.

And with the tournament using the Sinclair method, where an athlete's body weight is multiplied with his total lift, the GetFit CNMI bet had a final tally of 321.154kgs.

Harold Aranda, who was born on Saipan but is currently living and studying in Guam, came in second place behind Santos.

Santos was also the overall winner with his Sinclair score with Guam's Shane Concepcion (314.957) and Alex Johnson (300.636), the Airman who ruled the 4th Marianas Trench Throwdown last Octo-

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CONTRIBUTED PHOTO
GetFit CNMI bets Ray Santos, third left, Bonnie Cruz, fourth left, Salvi Villanueva, fourth left, Angel San Nicolas, fifth left, and Joey Tudela, right, join other participants in last Saturday's 2015 Micronesia Weightlifting Invitational.

WSR makes IFL semifinals

By ROSELYN B. MONROYO
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REPORTER

Defending champion William S. Reyes Elementary School is one step away from a return trip to the finals in the girls division of the 2015 NMIFA U12 Interscholastic Football League.

WSR, which won last year's championship against Garapan Elementary School, is currently in second place in the team standings in the Northern Group behind Gregorio T. Camacho Elementary School. The Kingfishers improved to a 3-2-0 win-draw-loss record following its 3-1 win against Garapan last Thursday at the GEC pitch. GTC, on the other hand, owns a 4-1-0 card after a 5-0 victory against Oleai last Friday.

Only the Top 2 teams in the Northern Group will advance to the semifinals against the No. 1 and 2 finishers of the Southern Group. Hopwood Junior High School-2 leads the Southern Group with its immaculate 5-0-0 slate with its fifth win (5-0) recorded against San Antonio Middle School last week. Koblerville Elementary School is in second place with its 3-0-2 mark, while San Antonio and Hopwood-1 are at No. 3 and 4 with their 2-0-3 and 0-0-5 slates.

In the boys division, WSR is on top of the Northern Group after earning a 4-1-0 record with one game left in the double-round robin elimination. WSR, which placed second to Saipan International School in last year's competition, notched its fourth win at the expense of GES, 1-0, last Wednesday.

Mt. Carmel School is in second place after bowing to WSR

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ROSELYN B. MONROYO
A William S. Reyes Elementary School defender, second from left, tries to catch up with a Garapan Elementary School player during the second half of their first round duel in the girls division of the 2015 NMIFA U12 Interscholastic Football League last Thursday at the GEC pitch.